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THE THREEFOLD BOND

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"Of communion with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost."

By

REGINALD KIRBY

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TO

MY DEAR WIFE

WHOSE EARTHLY LOVE HAS
SO MUCH OF HEAVEN IN IT.

INTRODUCTION

THAT ministry is surely wisely guided which seeks to bring forth out of its treasures "things new and old." I welcome, therefore, Mr. Kirby's study of John Owen's teaching on the Trinity in Unity, because it shows the wisdom that can learn from the past together with the sense of present-day need which can translate the older teaching into modern speech. John Owen would have welcomed the constant appeal to Scripture which his modern interpreter makes, for he described himself as being ever careful "to bring no prejudicate sense unto the words, to impose no meaning of my own or other men's upon them, nor to be imposed on by the reasonings, pretences, or curiosities of any; always I went nakedly to the Word itself, to learn humbly the mind of God in it, and to express it as He should enable me."

The doctrine of the Trinity is one where we depend entirely upon the teaching of Scripture. It cannot be derived from any merely human reasoning. The New Testament evidence presents us with many lines of truth which converge upon this one doctrine, whilst this doctrine in its turn illumines and confirms the doctrines which lead up to it. The value of this book is that it relates what may easily be a barren piece of dogmatics to the practical necessities of Christian life. Mr. Kirby has preserved a wise balance in his treatment of the many sides of his subject, and the clarity of his thought and expression adds greatly to the value of his work.

Still as of old the issue lies between the Christian

belief in the Trinity in Unity, and some form of Unitarianism which gives us a Deity transcendent but aloof, a Jesus admired but merely human, and a Spirit who is simply a vague influence. From the latter alternative we turn gladly, under the guidance of this book, to seek communion with Father, Son and Spirit, One God, blessed for evermore.

With thanksgiving for my friend's keen mind and devout heart, I commend his book to all who would walk with God.

P. W. EVANS.

Spurgeon's College,
London.

PREFACE

THE short sketch at the beginning of this little book does not pretend to be a biography. It is but an indication of a man. It is simply the portrait of a Puritan. Shadowy, yet impressive; sombre, yet solid: the character of John Owen repays investigation.

The central portions, which are based upon his work "Of Communion with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit," are neither an analysis nor a criticism; they are an exposition. I have followed his thought as far as possible in these chapters. No other parts of his writings have been drawn upon. All the quotations are his own.

The concluding chapters suggest the lines along which the Christian doctrine of communion with God can be developed, and indicate its practical bearing upon redeemed personality.

My sincere thanks and deep appreciation are due to Miss Dorothy Smith for her untiring and faithful work on the manuscript.

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The Portrait of a Puritan

THE preacher paused. He looked over his congregation, and once again sensed the solemnity of the occasion. That his task would be no easy one he had known when he undertook it, yet as he looked he realised it again. In the great yet shadowy chamber where he preached his glance went from face to face. What men they were! What strange things they had done. Though he seemed to have waited long in his discourse, it was but a moment. He was a man of singular restraint: his passions, deep and sombre, were always in check. A man of composed mind, he knew what it was to move in the exalted atmosphere that comes from communion with God in thought and life. Yet he was no recluse. His learning equipped him for life. He had ever mingled with men, and had played some part in moulding them to what he knew to be God's will. That will was for him the final authority of life. In the pursuing of it these men, to whom he was now speaking in stern and sober terms, had adventured themselves and their all. Never before had such a congregation waited. Never before had such strange men gathered together to hear the word of God, for England had never known such a time as this. A king had been executed. He had not died in the heat of battle or under the poisoner's hand; no usurper had taken his crown, or disloyal son dislodged him. He had been executed openly, almost theatrically his head had been cut off. He had died nobly, stiffly scorning from the first the pretensions of those who had brought him

to the block; and the preacher's eye quietly moved around this strange picture gallery. Men, greater than they knew, were arrayed around him; men who, a few days previously, had sat at Westminster Hall to listen to the charge of high treason against the king; who had watched that strange and pathetic scene as Charles walked through St. James' Park to the scaffold by Whitehall; and they were now listening to the sermon by John Owen. He had possibly heard the king's speech to the people, perhaps had seen his head fall, and now he was preaching to those who, in the future, would hold the destinies of the people in their hands, who would be held up to bitter obloquy, but whose only consideration was the will of God.

In this the preacher and congregation were one. He continued gravely, his hearers followed with attention, for they were used to listening. This was the English Parliament, or what was left of it. And these men, with all their faults, would not hesitate to make great decisions.

This was a momentous occasion in the life of John Owen. Eminent as a theologian; a friend of nobles as of commoners; in the very front rank of public affairs; he was preaching to those who had taken upon themselves the responsibilities of government. His text, from Jer. xv. 19, 20, gave him his subject—"Righteous zeal encouraged by Divine protection."

Later the sermon was published with additional pages, which show the boldness of his nature—"Toleration and the duty of the magistrate about religion"—in which he made his continued appeal for toleration of variety of opinion within the Church.

The preacher unfolded his theme in general terms. Severe as he had always been with himself, holding his own feelings ever in check, there is no trace of his feelings now. At the same time, as he continues there

is no hesitation or embarrassment. The trend of his mind is clearly announced: "When kings commend unrighteous things, and people suit them with willing compliance, none doubt but the destruction of them both is just and righteous." There is a slow murmur of appreciation, or is it disapproval? "Men who, under God, deliver a kingdom, may have the kingdom's curses for their pains." He could not have known how true this forecast would be. Of those who listened to him on this fateful occasion, who would follow him into an end of peace?

Doubtless, as he preached, the sense of deep unpopularity and aversion, felt by the bulk of the nation to these men, was understood. He possibly shared the view of Cromwell, Milton and other regicides that this dread act was a painful necessity. Who, they thought, could put their trust in such a Prince: what other way for the ending of the strife was there?

While Owen, in this sermon, did not justify, openly, the act, in solemn words he faced the future, commending his hearers to the righteous judgment of the Omnipotent. Whatever else might befall, he knew, and the knowledge was so deeply ingrained in his soul that it had become part of himself, that God could never forsake His own. They might be tried, they might be misunderstood, they might suffer like the prophets of old, and fall by the edge of the sword, but still they would belong to God. This was the message. It ever had been so. He knew, with a knowledge which was not of an ephemeral character, that God could be depended upon, that He would succour His own.

The shadows lengthened: the sermon ended. The men who had listened, departed. The preacher himself quietly took up the things of every-day life. He lived in times of tumult, even so, he ever carried in his soul the certainty that comes from the meditation upon the

mysteries of God. He knew what it was to commune with God.

Among the many who served his day and generation when the birth-pangs of a new era were upon his country, John Owen played no inconspicuous part. Little is known of his private life. Few letters remain to tell us what manner of man this was. He left no memoir in which his soul is exhibited to the scrutiny of mankind. He would have passed, unremarked, off the stage of life if it were not that with a massive intelligence he had meditated profoundly upon the deep things of God, and in writings voluminous, often indeed tedious and obscure, passed on to future ages the abiding doctrines of grace. These doctrines, nurturing the souls of the Puritans, gave to them, with their hardness, much nobility; with their narrowness, so much vision. And they bequeath to those who are willing in their turn to seek, and perchance find, the inward fellowship that always enables men to live greatly.

Owen's character had been long in the making. Like the Puritan period, of which he was such an outstanding figure, he had his roots in the past. Of ancient Welsh descent, he was the son of the Vicar of Stadham in Oxfordshire, whose family had lived in that district for two generations. Owen was born in 1616. There is no record of his mother. Little is known of his boyhood. His early education was probably given to him by his father until he passed to the Academy of Edward Sylvester, and at the age of twelve entered Queen's College, Oxford.

This formative period in his life was formative, also, in the history of the English people. Men of calibre unique in the annals of any race were being tested in such a way as to bring out their innate qualities. Political theories, new to human kind since the dawn of Western civilization, were beginning to emerge. Religious

ideas, which would affect men more profoundly than all else, were slowly taking shape. As a boy at Oxford, working prodigiously, John Owen was qualifying for the great place he was afterward to take, while Richard Baxter, but two years older, was immersed in the writings of Duns Scotus, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas, and was learning from Sibb's *Bruised Reed* and the Bible the art of holy meditation. Owen was an all-round student; athletic, vigorous and practical, he lived a many-sided life.

It was inevitable that such a man, in such an age, should follow with keen interest the great movements which were destined to affect posterity. The personal rule of Charles, with its attempt to substitute for the native constitution of the English people a thoroughgoing autocracy, was being manifested on the religious side by the rise of Laud to a position of supremacy in the Church. Even Clarendon declared that he was "rough of temper, impatient of contradiction and arbitrary." His final challenge was in that region where true freedom is born and nurtured, the realm of conscience. In this respect he cut across the nation's tendencies in both the religious and political spheres. The final authority of life is in the soul of man; the ultimate authority of the soul is God. Between those two there can be, in the last analysis, no arbiter. That is why true religion is ever the safeguard of true freedom. So Owen's mind, "delivered by the fear of God from every other fear," rebelled.

He had become an M.A. at the age of 19, and was admitted to orders by Bishop Bancroft. Later becoming chaplain and tutor to the household of Sir Robert Dormer of Ascot, he was but following the practice of many divines of Puritan thought at this time. This was the policy that nurtured Puritanism in an age of repression. The Puritans might be deprived of possi-

bilities of advancement in the Church: they might be relieved of high office in the State: they might be ousted from University positions, but they could not be separated from those godly laymen over whom their doctrines were exercising such an influence. It was one of the great characteristics of Puritanism during this time that it was able to throw around the minds of young noblemen and noblewomen the mantle of an educative influence by which its doctrines fell upon soil prepared for them. It served two purposes: when clergymen of Puritan thought were received into the households of country squires and landed gentry, they themselves were protected and their benefactors' families were nourished in mind and soul.

But with the growing tensity of feeling, and division of opinion, many rifts were to come in the society that would ultimately, under the influence of dynamic ideals, break asunder. There were those who could go thus far and no further. There were others who would dare to go all the way. The coming crisis of liberty meant for Owen, who had accepted with Lord Lovelace a position similar to that he had held with Sir Robert Dormer, the loss both of his sphere of influence and his inheritance—for he had expectations from a Welsh uncle of wealth, whose sympathies were royalist. Owen's sympathies were increasingly on the side of liberty.

After this break, he removed to London and passed through a period similar to that through which many men of God before and since have passed. He experienced a time of mental depression and spiritual uncertainty. His mind, which had already absorbed so much theology, was at the present time the dominant factor. His opinions were the things that mattered. But he began to realise that his soul counted. It was in the light of such spiritual perplexities and anxieties concerning his soul and God that he was moved to the extremities

of depression, and almost despair. His exposition of the 130th Psalm is taken to be, by many, the account of his own spiritual development. It is indeed not only rich in theology, but touches upon those soul-searching experiences that come to all who live deeply. London at this time was favoured by many eminent preachers, not least Dr. Edmund Calamy, whose eloquence drew crowds to Aldermanbury Chapel. To him, on one occasion with a friend, Owen resorted. Great was the disappointment of the congregation when an unknown man mounted the pulpit. Many walked out, but Owen, who was tired, remained. The earnest sermon of this unknown man upon Matt. viii. 26, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith," brought to Owen the settled peace of mind for which he was seeking. He entered into that communion with God of which he was afterward so eminent an exponent.

* * * * *

John Owen was a man of peculiar mental clarity, and of eminent spiritual discernment. His contribution to the thought of his day was the logical setting forth of the implications of Puritan theology in their relation to the inner life. He did not willingly enter upon a public career. It was his wish to remain the faithful Pastor of the flock of God. But such were his talents that the need of the age laid its claim upon him. Yet he ever retained his spiritual outlook. To him grace was all. "They (believers) will receive nothing, practise nothing, own nothing in their worship but what is of His appointment. They know that from the foundation of the world He never did allow, nor ever will, that in anything the will of the creature should be the measure of His own, or the principle of his worship either as to matter or manner." In such an outlook it is true that Owen did not stand alone, but he had brought to his task of enunciating the Puritan outlook a mind

enriched by much classical learning, and at the same time of much practical application. To him it was not whether a thing was good or bad according to the view of the age, but whether it was sanctioned by the Divine Mind. This Mind, revealed in the Bible, was for him the only standard of authority. It was not for him to ask what he could believe or do, or what he could not, but what he was commanded to do.

For him the only law in the Church was that of Christ. He emphasized repeatedly that the only thing about which men needed to be careful was that they should do or not do the things Christ commanded or prohibited. It was this increasing assertion of Christ's sole supremacy in the Church that led him inevitably along the path of all non-conformity. With the increasing division of opinion in public affairs he must follow the dictates of his soul. When he was delivered from the burden of sin, in recovered vigour, he wrote in 1642 *The Display of Arminianism*. This embodied much that was characteristic in Puritan thought. It affirmed unequivocally the Divine Sovereignty. The Parliament had recently brought into being a Committee for purging the Church of scandalous ministers. Among those ejected was the Minister of Fordham, in Essex. Owen was invited to succeed him. He settled down. He married and had eleven children, of whom only one survived infancy.

This early period of Owen's life was perhaps the best he ever knew. In the secluded village, where his signature can still be seen upon the parochial register, he was a true Pastor to his flock. His congregations grew, his writings grew. He increasingly approved the Parliamentary position. Deprived a little later by the patron of his parish, he was invited to Coggeshall, also in Essex. About this time his mind was tending strongly toward independency, for he had boundless

confidence in the vitality of truth. He condemned enforced conformity and persecution of heresy. "Heresy, said he, "is a canker, but a spiritual one; let it be prevented by spiritual means. Cutting off men's heads is no proper remedy for it."

Within his own Church, owing to the turmoil of the times, it was possible to develop in a decidedly congregational manner. His writings continued and in 1648 his *Death of Death in the Death of Christ* marked the high-water mark. This work brought him into contact with Richard Baxter, and began those friendly bouts in which the two great Puritans from time to time engaged.

* * * * *

From the first Owen's deep-rooted convictions regarding Calvinism never wavered. As time went on he did change his views regarding Church polity; from conformity he moved to Presbyterianism, and, coinciding with his removal from Fordham to Coggeshall, he moved in the direction of Congregationalism. This was becoming increasingly the dominant form of religious expression of the men who, in the army and Parliament, were assuming control of national affairs. It was inevitable, therefore, that Owen, whose keen mind made him a master of whatever subject he expounded, should move to the front rank among them.

He early became acquainted with Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell, laying his hand upon his shoulder, wished to make his further acquaintance, to which the Puritan Pastor, with grave dignity, replied that such would be more to his advantage than to that of the General. Cromwell saw in this man one who would be able to do for him a work in the realm of thought he could not do himself. Owen, therefore, accompanied him to

Ireland, and returning, after a while, accompanied him to Scotland.

The great turning point in his career came when, at the instance of Oliver, he became Dean of Christchurch and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford. This was indeed a position which would require all his insight and strength. The City and the University during the troubles had been for the king, and although they had been pacified they remained insubordinate. Scholarship was at a low ebb, discipline lax. It fell upon John Owen to revive learning, deepen spirituality, and impose upon the University that true discipline of heart and mind which is the core of Puritanism.

He was singularly fitted for this. With a trained mind and versed in public affairs, he combined a conscientiousness and virility with which to deal with the public affairs of his day. He continued his preaching. He did his best to instil into the minds of those over whom he exerted, increasingly, an influence, a regard for the deeper truths of Puritanism. His profound scholarship soon made itself felt. Without question Owen, during his period of office as Vice-Chancellor, did much to safeguard that tradition of scholastic Puritanism which had been so marked a feature of its rise.

Of his many writings, and of his continued controversies, it is not possible to speak, but without question he stands out among his contemporaries as a man of mark. What a portrait he presents; polished, grave, carrying with him a due sense of the dignity inherent both in his office as Pastor and in his call as a child of God.

He was a man who could sustain many parts. He possessed at the same time great charm of manner and strength of conviction—a remarkable combination.

In him were united practical gifts and rare spiritual

insight. He spoke to his own time, for he saw the tendencies of his age and realised, perhaps before others, what these tendencies would mean; and so passed on to all succeeding ages those spiritual verities which mean everything to human life.

That he was possessed of such a spiritual independence is shown by the fact that, when the time came, he was prepared, then, to break with the Great Protector. Owen outlived the Interregnum and saw something of the decadent days of the restoration period. Amid many changes he preserved the integrity of his spiritual life.

He is, above all the Puritans, the exponent of the practical and the theoretic in the Christian faith. Amid all the vicissitudes of office and claims of worldly affairs it is evident from his writings that he lived with God. There was with him in a very marked degree that sense of sufficiency to which Puritanism gave birth. The soul that knows communion with God has within itself something that renders it independent of worldly transformations. This deepest experience of the Christian revelation which he knew to be grounded in the doctrine of redemption in Christ, meant for him a faith in the Trinity. This possessed his mind at all times.

It was this that gave to the religious men of his age their firm grasp upon doctrine. They knew that if God was a reality to them, then He must satisfy all of their nature, hence the continued insistence upon doctrine; for doctrine, to the Puritan, was the expression not only of that which was in the Bible, but that which he himself had experienced in his communion with the Father.

It is true that to modern eyes much of the writings which satisfied the men of this remarkable period seem dry and uninteresting. One has to dig deep for the jewels, but unquestionably they are there, and when brought to the surface flash with a celestial light.

There is in such reading the certitude which accompanies faith. It enters into every department of life. In this portrait of a Puritan we see a man who did attempt to bring his religious convictions into every avenue of his life. Whatever John Owen did, he did with an eye to God's glory, for this, it must be repeated, was the basis, as well as the crown, of all. To the Calvinist, the supremacy of the will of God, far from denuding his will of vigour and his mind of light, strengthened and enlightened both. So with a quiescent soul he was able to bring to bear upon every problem a detachment not possible to those who were without this certainty.

It was this that made the Puritan a man of action. Communion with God, for him, was not a thing of repose, but of resolution. He could rise from his knees invigorated. He knew that whatever he did he did under the compulsion of the Almighty Spirit. It is true that in this portrait of a Puritan there is seen much that we should think rugged, even hard. It is true that there was much that was sombre. Let it not rob us of the appreciation of its nobility.

To those who will embark upon the adventure there is in the writings of this Puritan a wealth of Christian teaching much needed to-day. The writing is not terse, but laboured; the repetition frequent, and yet from time to time as the beauty of the structure is realised and the depth of thought followed, beautiful gleaming flashes illumine the pages, like phosphorescence gleaming in the sea at night. That there is depth all will agree, and strength too. That there is beauty those will discover who gaze long upon the picture.

This work (Of communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, each Person distinctly in love, grace, consolation) was published in 1657. In substance it had previously been delivered in addresses at Oxford during his Vice-Chancellorship.

It is very plain that Owen nourished his inner life with highest thoughts, and exercised his soul in communion with God during the period which was possibly the most exacting of all his public life. In constant touch with national affairs, bearing his part in the shaping of them, he lived the life of communion, reasserting in the home of learning the sacredness of it and instilling it into the minds of those whose lives had grown dissolute. During a period of public upheaval he himself knew what it was to enter into the Sanctuary and abide there.

It has been objected that in making such distinction between the communion of the believer with the distinct Persons of the Trinity, Owen passes beyond that which Scripture warrants. Such cannot be judged from the numerous scriptural citations with which his work abounds. In any case he is but setting forth what is the experience of those who do enter into communion with God, and shows that the doctrine of the Trinity has its basis in human experience as well as Divine revelation.

For to him, as to all who would enter into fellowship with God, there is the realisation of a trinity of interest. It is " through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father " (Eph. ii. 18). In so doing, the reality of our fellowship with God as Father and as Son and as Holy Spirit becomes the most abiding certainty of our life. We realise that the grace which has found and won our soul has become its life, that we have entered into a new state of living, and are being " changed from glory into glory."

The portrait of the Puritan passes into oblivion, but the power of the fellowship which has brought it into being abides for ever. It is held by a cord that cannot easily be broken, for it is a three-fold bond.

The Supreme Quest

The Supreme Quest

Communion With God, The Father.

THE Christian life is essentially secret though its results are obvious. What is seen in life is the result of what is experienced in the soul. Salvation is the beginning of communion, and communion is the end of salvation. Communion with God is the source and power of the spiritual life and it is the claim of Christian faith that it offers this communion. It is a great assertion. Yet from the communion that individual Christians have with God, which is made possible by their experience of salvation and ever deepens in their apprehension of it, comes the fellowship they have within the Church.

The Church offers fellowship, and can only give it as believers receive it.

The Christian Church in its early days extended by offering to men a two-fold experience: the first was based upon the forgiveness which they found in Christ; and the second was based upon the fellowship they had with others who had received a similar grace. In the midst of world declension, and often under conditions of deepest degradation, Christians claimed a fellowship with God!

What a contradiction it seemed. When such a claim was viewed in the light of those making it, it seemed a travesty. They had no prestige, little learning, rarely any position by which to support this claim. According to an ancient writer they were counted the filth of the

world and the off-scourings of all things. It might be reasonably objected that they could confer no benefit; indeed, that their fellowship would incur but trouble and reproach.

Yet the appearance deeply belied the truth. In a world of sham, and in face of apparent disadvantages, they knew reality. This reality obsessed their minds and life. It was both glorious and desirable. It resided in this: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

This is the soul of Christian life. Lacking this, whatever attractions it may offer, whatever may be its outward influence or minute organisation, it is worse than useless. For nothing can compensate the Church if it loses its soul.

In this regard the life of each believer must make the affirmation by means of which the Christian Church exists, and which alone gives it meaning in this world. The affirmation, experienced first, lived after, is that the saints of God have communion with Him.

In entering into a study of this deepest of all human experiences, it is necessary that the soul itself should be prepared not only to learn, but to live. For communion with God is life.

Yet it can be easily understood that this communion is not the result of our own "nature" as we know it. A comparison between whatever we conceive of God and what we know of ourselves leads to an understanding of this utter inability. The Bible, mirror of life, reveals God. And in revealing God reveals also man's state. He is light, we are darkness. He is life, we are dead. He is Love, we are enmity. It is upon the basis of a real understanding of the facts of human nature that the Christian Gospel asserts that naturally man cannot have communion with God. In such condition we have neither God, nor hope, nor fellowship (Eph. ii. 12). Indeed, we have no interest in God, and are deprived

of power to return to Him, for sin has worked weakness in our spiritual being. As two cannot walk together unless they are agreed, so man cannot walk with God unless he himself is transformed anew into the likeness of God.

We can go further and say that no work that God has made, no attribute that He has revealed could meet this situation. The only possibility of communion with Him is as He Himself comes to man and in grace and power and loving mercy bequeaths Himself to man (Heb. x. 19-21). Grace is of God and from God; it *is* God.

Thus it is that the New Testament unfolds what is implicit in the Old Testament. Abraham, the friend of God, had faith, and so entered by that faith into communion. David, the man after God's own heart, lived to serve Him; Enoch walked with Him. All this was made possible by the Spirit who was given in His fulness at Pentecost, and now living within the hearts of those who trust Christ, gives liberty (2 Cor. iii. 17, 18).

In the Old Testament all who were faithful enjoyed the substance of communion; the way of access, however, was not made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing. Their communion was of a partial, almost vacillating character; it lacked the finality that only could come by the personal indwelling of the Spirit. This personal indwelling was made possible by the entrance of our High Priest into the most holy place. The veil which was upon them is torn away in Christ. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"; He gives liberty of soul, because He gives Himself to the soul. It is in Christ as Mediator and Friend that we have boldness to aspire to communion; it is by the Spirit, life of our life, that the communion becomes a fact.

So it is in Christ alone that we have communion with God. Upon that fact hangs all subsequent thought, all spiritual experience. He is the new foundation. Through

Him alone sinners, who in their own nature cannot have communion, are admitted into it. They share with Him His own fellowship with the Father.

This is an astonishing fact; an inestimable privilege. Yet this is the claim of the humblest believer.

In this communion many things and persons, states and actions, play their part. For communion is many sided. It has as many aspects as human and divine personality. It may be evidenced in mutual participation. It may result from a common interest. It may arise from a similar condition, It may follow from actions, whether good or evil, which personalities do together. All these aspects, and many more, are revealed in the communion of the believer with God.

When we ask, then, what is the innermost nature of fellowship with God it becomes immediately obvious that it cannot be natural; nor, owing to man's condition, can it be achieved. Mysticism is at best a poor attempt to take the place of grace. "The infinite disparity that is between God and man made by the great philosopher" said John Owen, referring to Aristotle, "concludes that there could be no fellowship between them."

Communion is the result of something man does not do. The essence of it is in God's giving of Himself to man, who participates because he himself is drawn by the power of God's love into union with God Himself. Our communion with God is determined by His communication of Himself to us. This is why Christ matters so, for we can only return to God as He enables us to come: this is accomplished by the new union established between God and ourselves, in Christ. This union is the preliminary act of salvation into which we enter by a simple step of faith. It is a deep belief in the finished work of Christ, and can be viewed in two ways.

From one point of view it is perfect and complete. We are made anew in Christ; the full fruition of His

glory which we share with Him is seen in us by the Father. The total giving up of ourselves to Him approximates to that which God has already, by grace, brought into being. The union, while from one aspect perfect, from the other is initial and incomplete. We know ourselves to be but beginning. Indeed we are only the first fruits, grace in all its majesty and beauty is but dawning upon the soul. Our fellowship with God is always of His giving and our receiving. It is ever dependent upon His covenant of peace, which He never breaks, though we do so frequently, because it is ratified by the blood of Christ.

Into such fellowship He would have us enter, and the only entrance is faith. But this is no leap into the dark; this is an intelligent appreciation of the most real experience of our soul. This is a laying hold by the will of all that Christ makes effectual by His Spirit. This is a union, in which mind and will and emotion, drawn from us to Christ, are returned to us by Him in His own likeness. For faith is not a fetter, it is an anchor; it is a principle of life.

Can it be claimed that in this communion of the Christian with God there is variety of fellowship? Can it be urged that each Person of the Trinity can be appreciated in a peculiar manner? In 1 Cor. xii.4-6, Paul, speaking of the distribution of gifts and graces, does ascribe them distinctly to separate Persons. In the development of revelation it is certainly true that Father, Son and Spirit have been revealed in sequence. So in our approach to God it is through Christ "by one Spirit" that we come unto the Father (Eph. ii. 18).

It is true that the Father and the Son are spoken of as indwelling the believer (John xiv. 23); sometimes the Son only (1 Cor. i. 9), and sometimes the Holy Spirit only (2 Cor. xiii. 14), so it is very plain that each Person of the Trinity enters into a fellowship with the believer.

Yet in our approach to each Person there is one common ground, one holy manner by means of which we enter into that fellowship. For it is deeply true that God, in three Persons, is present in every operation of each Person. In the holy intimacies of communion and adventures of faith GOD is ever present, though as occasion arises we are directed toward that Person who can supremely minister to the soul the wholeness of God.

How blessed is our fellowship with the Father. He testifies to the Son, He is revealed through the Son, He is ever our final object of belief. What God is to us, in His Fatherly capacity, our faith, and love, and obedience reveal to the world.

The same faith, love and obedience which are centred on the Father are also centred upon Christ, who is the glory of God. What should we know of God were it not for Christ? "Ye believe in God" said He with the supreme audacity of eternal filiation, "believe also in Me."

At the same time believers have experienced that communion with the Spirit, personally and distinctly, is possible for the children of God. "There is no grace whereby our souls go forth unto God, no act of divine worship yielded to Him, no duty or obedience performed, but they are distinctly directed unto Father, Son and Spirit" says John Owen. In the Trinity of His Being God enjoys a community of living. So believers entering into fellowship with the Supreme Being also enjoy in Him a variety of living, a sweetness of intimacy, a glory of communion, unparalleled apart from Him. While we are told that we must believe in God and urged to have faith in Christ, we are also definitely warned against the sin of unbelief in reference to the Spirit. The same faith, by means of which we enter into a union of love with the Father and the Son, brings us also into fellow-

ship with the Spirit. The Father suffers in the Son, the Son glorifies the Father through the Spirit. The believer shares this holy relationship in ever deepening wonder.

John Owen is at pains to show that in assigning a distinct communion with each Person of the Trinity he is not in any way attempting to separate the operations of the whole in the actions of each Person. On the contrary, in the chapter in which he deals with the communion that Christians have with God the Father particularly, he makes the statement that " by what act soever we hold communion with any Person there is an influence from every Person to the putting forth of that act." Nevertheless, upon the basis of scripture and Christian experience he asserts that there is a peculiar fellowship possible with each Person in the Deity. And in the chapter which we now summarise he deals with the communion that believers have with God the Father. This communion is eminently a communion of love. The love of God is the great discovery of the Gospel. This love—free, undeserved and eternal—is bestowed upon believers by the Father. But while it is bestowed on believers by the Father (Phil. i. 28) it is purchased for them by the Son (Col. i. 14), and it is wrought in them by the Spirit (Eph. i. 19, 20). But the work of the Son, and the influence of the Spirit are in order that the believer might know the love of God, for the very essence of communion is fellowship with a Person, and the innermost secret of the Gospel is in its revelation of God, who is love (1 John iv. 8). Whatever may be the thoughts of men concerning God, apart from scriptural revelation, when they know Him through Christ by the Spirit they know that His nature is gracious, tender, compassionate, and that He gives Himself to them in free love. The very Words of Christ, " The Father Himself loveth you " (John xvi. 27) bring home to us this innermost experience of faith. So John Owen claims that there is most fre-

quent mention of the love of God where the Father is evidently intended. He is called "the God of Love" (2 Cor. xiii. 11).

The magnitude of this discovery can hardly be over-estimated. Its effect upon human character is incalculable. Its comforting assurance to men and women under all conditions is very real. It is of a two-fold character.

The love of God is evidenced in His *determinate* will to do good. This is distinctly ascribed to Him and is the cause of His sending His Son into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin. His love, which animates His Being, is not passive or without feeling, rather is it a love which wills to save, a love which will not let His creatures go, a love which is bent upon their reclamation.

Not only so, this love reveals itself in friendship and approbation. Having won us, He seeks to shower Himself upon us. "If a man love Me he will keep My words and My Father will love him." This love, the love of God, is the fountain of all blessing. All the gifts and graces of the renewed life spring from this, for this is the centre of universal life. This life—which is God—in spite of all appearances to the contrary, is love, and all the sweetnesses of human life flow from it.

This, then, is the basis of communion. It is by means of God's love that there is for us the possibility of fellowship. There is no way for man to aspire to God save as God conspires to come to him. This great element in the Christian life is determined by two things. The love of God must be *received.* Communion consists in giving and receiving. There is no way for man to receive God's love but to believe it. Faith is not only the gateway whereby we come to God, but also the channel by which God comes to us. As we believe in His love we have it. And by believing we are brought, through the Son, to the Father. "Though all our

refreshment actually lie in the streams yet by them we are led up to the fountain." This, then, is the purpose of Christ : to bring men to God. Few there are who, in the transports of meditation or service, in the understanding of the inwardness of Christian life, lift their hearts and minds so high by faith. " Here," says the Puritan, and he spoke out of a life which was full of activity and battling with the world, " all is serene and quiet."

It is this pervading consciousness of the love of God into which it is possible for mortals to enter, that is the secret spring of Christian living. This is the will of God, that by faith we should always know Him as benign, tender, kind, loving, unchangeable. In revealing Himself so in Christ He lifts us to His very heart. For this alone gives peace. As day by day, amid many difficulties and diversions, we are conscious that the love of the Father is bent upon us to save us out of them all for Himself, and that the love of the Father through them all is made known to us in a fellowship that walks with us within this world, we have peace. But the love of God must not only be received but *returned.* God loves that He may be loved. His eternal plea—so wonderful is His grace—is " My son, give Me thine heart." He, because it is intrinsic in His Fatherly nature, yearns for our affection, for our love. When the soul of man sees God so and realises that he not only can receive something from God, but can give something to God, he draws very near in communion. For this nearness to God is the true union of the soul with Him.

There are certain ways in which the love of God to us, and our love to Him agree. In both these aspects there is a sense of rest and finality. Life can offer nothing more than love—it is life. God can offer no more than love—it is Himself. We can yield no more than love—it is ourselves. In this blissful fellowship there is a sense of rich contentment in fulfilled being. " He will save,

He will rejoice over thee with love, He will rest in His love" (Zeph. iii. 17). That there is joy over one sinner that repenteth indicates that there must be undreamed of delight in the fellowship of a heart that rests in God, and whose greatest wish is to do His will. God is glad when we receive His love just as we are when we find it. We can go further and say that as the soul rests in God and draws from Him the true quality of living, so God rests in the soul and by His Presence in every turn of life's road gives to the soul strength for every hour. The only way of communicating the issues and fruits of these loves—the love of God to man, and the love of man to God—is in Christ. He is the treasury of love, the High Priest into whose hand we put the offering, the One Mediator between God and man, the One who brings us to God. Indeed the life of grace is the life of Christ within the soul. In delighting in the saved sinner God is delighting in His Only Son. Whatever we are, whatever we know of God, and whatever God becomes to us is through Christ. We are chosen in Him, blessed in Him. All the efforts of our renewed life are made possible in Him. He is the Living Grace whereby the children of God enter into communion with God.

In comparing the love of God to man, and the love of man to God, there is, however, this great difference: God's love is a love of ever-flowing bounty. He loves because it is His nature to love. What He wills He works. There is no disparity between the thought and the act. Our love is a love of duty, and strive as we may, our living ever falls short of our willing. He adds to us by giving us Himself. We add nothing to Him for who can give to the Almighty? He gives us rest, delight, reverence, obedience, and in returning these virtues we but give Him all His own.

Most significantly is it true that the difference between His love and ours is shown in the fact that His is ante-

cedent, ours is consequent. He loved us before the foundation of the world. He loved us when we were yet sinners. He loves us all the time. His love is like Himself, constant, not capable of diminution. We had been loved long before we knew something of its wonder, and often, having known it, we stray from it, and the returns that we make to it vary with our moods and are unequal to our greatest attemptings. He loves His people always, in their sinning as in their faithfulness, for the principle of grace can never alter. All that the redeemed can say is, in accents of wonder, love and praise, "Oh, the depth, the height, the length, the breadth of His unspeakable love."

All that the life of communion can ever show is the reflection of that love, for it is manifestly true that if we are in communion with God we shall have power to resist temptation, for love never fails. We shall have a mind to know His will, for love teaches all things. We shall have a will to do His behests, for love energises the soul.

Thus it is that communion is the mainspring of living. Yet it is something about which many Christians show little concern. "Unacquaintedness with our mercies, our privileges, is our sin as well as our trouble," says John Owen. This is indeed true, and it is because of our lack of communion with God that we are without the joy with which our lives should abound, and that we are weak when we should be strong. "At the best many think there is no sweetness at all in Him toward us, but what is purchased at the high price of the blood of Jesus Christ," but "the free fountain and spring of all is in the bosom of the Father." "Eternal life was with the Father and was manifested unto us." (1 John i. 2).

Can it be that in entering into this communion and enjoying it there are rules which make its deeper appre-

ciation possible? How can the mind and will be directed toward God in obedience to the Spirit and so live in communion with Him? What are the simple lines along which we must proceed?

It is unquestionably necessary that the mind of the believer should train itself to view God always as love. We must remind ourselves repeatedly that we live in Him, and that this is His nature. While it is well to remember the majesty, the severity and the greatness of God; while it is inevitable that we should be immersed in the problems of life which often present perplexities to the soul, yet we must always remember that He is tender. This must be the basis of our communion. This must be the fundamental act of our faith. We must assure ourselves at all times that in spite of discouragements and disappointments, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, God *IS* love. It is this that does away with apprehension, it is this that bequeaths peace to the soul. We must ever think of Him in terms of love.

We must think of the One whose love is showered upon us as being in Himself always sufficient. It is a love that from eternity has been bent upon entering into communion with the souls that trust Him, which is ours to enjoy. While in Himself He has a community of living and a richness of fellowship that makes it possible for Him to enjoy fulness of life without the aid of any created being, yet the Eternal God is our refuge, and His love our unfailing support.

Think of the nature of this love. It is eternal. It was fixed upon us before the foundation of the world. "It was from eternity that He laid in His own bosom a design for our happiness."

Remember that this love is the free operation of His will. He loves because He wills; no obligation is laid upon Him. Other things may be under the rule

of law, and may be bound by circumstances and causes outside themselves, but this love is untrammelled.

It is unchangeable. Whatever may happen in the universe, the love of God can never change : it can only ever exhibit His patience and His forbearance. Even sin's provocation cannot mar that love.

It is a love that distinguishes. It never overlooks the finite in the infinite. He cares for each one. Love knows its own. It is when the *mind* is so fixed on God, and draws from God the elements that constitute His own nature, that He becomes the object of our love. For God's love comes into life that we may live it. We must " learn to act thoughts of faith." This is where the example of Christ means so much. In His human nature He knew the love of God and acted ever upon that certainty. He ever saw beyond the seen, the unseen ; within the crude the beautiful ; beyond the turmoil the serene. To Him the most real thing in life was the love of God. Consequently He lived His life upon the assumption that it was so. So from the human point of view love to others, gratitude, purity, unselfishness and all the practical marks of a life lived in communion with God, were revealed in His life, too, because His *mind* was stayed on God.

It is this communion that makes the soul acceptable to God. Rebellious thoughts lie at the root of wrong doing. It is when men think of Him as capricious, unkind or unjust that they cloak their own deeds with what they suppose are His methods. In thinking of Him so communion is marred. True communion with God endears our soul to Him. " If the love of a father will not make a child delight in him, what will ? " It is as we exercise our thoughts upon the eternal, free, unchangeable and fruitful love of God that we find our lives conforming to that love. It is this response to His love that fills God's heart with joy. There is a sense in which He wills

to save all men. "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." For as Christ saves the soul to live in it, He enables the Father to delight in it also.

It may be that in a consideration of this question of communion certain objections may arise in the mind. We may well say how can we be sure that God does love us? You cannot be sure until you believe—just as you cannot know the reality of human love until you accept it. And you cannot believe until you realise that the Cross of Christ is both the sign and the seal of God's love. For the Cross is not man's work, but God's. While sin effected it, grace perfected it. "Our knowing of it is our believing of it as revealed." We can be sure that God loves us, otherwise Christ has died in vain.

But perhaps the objection which is most acute resides in the fact that we find it so hard to love God. This, of course, is because so frequently we invert the order: we think that our love comes first, whereas it is God's love that wins ours. We do not need to strive to love Him, we need to rest in the thought of His love, and then we shall find that His love has won ours. Our love is the result of His. "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us" (1 John iv. 10). Love wins love.

As, however, the Christian looks out upon the world he sees in it so much that is contrary to the love of God. It is obvious that injustice, difficulty, sorrow reign, and the man of God is often brought near to despair when he wonders how it can be that such are permitted. How can it be that God's world suffers so? The answer is more with man than with God. In bestowing Himself upon man God has also bestowed upon man the possibility of turning from himself. While in the ultimate the problem of human sin and human suffering are beyond the explanations that may suffice the mind but never touch the heart, it is true that we must hold to God's

love in spite of all. For this is the crucial test of faith. This is the final trial of the believer. It is *from* such vicarious suffering as the believer endures in thought and feeling with others, that he enters, with God, into a communion in which God Himself suffers for man. While the explanations may be inadequate, the sense of the suffering Saviour and the realisation of a loving Father who gives Himself for His creation is more than sufficient to satisfy the wondering soul. "Lay down, then, thy reasonings, take up the love of the Father upon a pure act of believing, and that will open thy soul to let it out unto the Lord in the communion of love." The injustice of the world is seen to be for mankind a very pit of strife out of which God lifts the soul that trusts Him into a communion it could never otherwise know. For while God is not responsible for human sin and suffering He uses the faith by which it can be overcome to draw His children ever nearer to Himself.

This, then, is the antidote for all spiritual and moral difficulties: communion with God is the one thing that saves and protects the life of the believer. As the mind learns to delight in the love of God, the life returns to Him from whom it came. As this communion becomes the daily practice of the soul it is evidenced in every incident of living. It is necessary that God, as Father, be continually received into the soul as One full of love, tenderness and beneficence. This is the true order. It is not that life conforms to God first, but that the soul communes with God, and from this communion the life is lifted into a daily fellowship. We must so live in our soul as to endear ourselves to Him if we would learn to exhibit Him in everyday life.

Yet there is continued antipathy in our spirit to close walking with Him. The cause of this lies deep in the spiritual maladies that afflict human minds, and deepest of them all is the neglect of the duty of communing with

God the Father in love. But if the heart is once taken up with this, the most meaningful of all human relations, it cannot but choose to be ever pure and endeared to Him. This is the secret: to exercise thought continually upon the free, eternal, fruitful love of God as the delight and true exercise of the soul. We *know* we have His love as we believe it. This leads to an interchange of love. The inner life of the soul is dependent upon communion with the Father, and the inner life is the only safeguard of the outer life—"Though all others are hard to me, yet my Father is tender and full of compassion."

It is in the exercise of this faculty of soul that the real distinction between the children of this world and the children of the Kingdom is seen. In outward life there may be points of disparity or likeness; there may be the performance of duties and the enjoyment of outward privileges; there may be much apparent similarity; but the inward difference is profound. "Holiness becometh His Presence for ever."

It is remarkable how Owen anticipates much that is evident in modern theology regarding fellowship with God. In this insistence on the fact that communion does not consist in outward things but in a nameless experience which is more real to the believer than anything else, he shows clearly that the continuity of spiritual experience is the final vindication of faith. This experience gives rise to a state of mind, and from this state of mind there comes a serenity of love to God and others. In other words, the true Christian is aware of God's love. He knows something which is hidden from all others. It may be marred by his continued failure, but never finally severed by sin. It is evidenced by a life which is continually leaving sin behind, and in which the peaceable fruits of righteousness develop as the result of communion. The analogy is between the state of complete fellowship

that existed with the Father and the Son when He was upon the earth and those who, by Him, are brought to the Father. Behind all the seen he was ever in complete accord with the unseen. He communed with His Father, and His Father spoke to Him. In our lesser degree this can become our portion, and if we would live our life with God it must be. For only as our souls know something of this communion can our lives know that fellowship which is life indeed. Thus, while it is the work of Jesus Christ to take us into communion with the Father, that is possible because He Himself shares it, and as we are brought with Him into this fellowship we know the Father through Him. The office of Christ is to make such communion possible and permanent. The fact of forgiveness is central in this inner life. While this forgiveness is effected once and for all when those who trust Christ receive it at His hand, it becomes the continued refreshment of their inner life as He daily manifests Himself to them as the One who can, and will, forgive. Only through such forgiveness can we know the Father. Only through Christ can we understand that God is a forgiving God.

How profound this revolution of thought is can hardly be appreciated after two thousand years of Christian teaching and living, yet how slow is the human mind to grasp this inner fact of communion. God, in Christ, wills to forgive, and that completely. God, in Christ, wills to bring us to Himself, and that by His grace alone. Only through Him can we grow in grace, by means of which sin ceases to hinder. Only through Him can we learn to love the Father. For it is the perennial paradox of life that forgiveness blossoms into love. In knowing Christ as the One who forgives, we know, in Him, the Father as the One whose eternal love is bent upon our complete union with Himself. And as the mind learns to delight itself in an ever-deepening appre-

ciation of this forgiveness it finds communion. Essential in the cultivation of communion is the quiet mind. The inner life of the Christian is, of necessity, hidden: it is his real self. It is that citadel that surrenders to none save God: it is the soul of the soul where no one save God Himself can enter. It is that essence of being into which earthly companions cannot enter: only God can satisfy us there. It is because man is a spirit that he can commune with God who is also a Spirit. Deep calls unto deep in an intercourse so still as to be of the nature of eternity.

The simplicity of this communion is the stumbling block to many. Prayer is its life blood. Yet it is this communion that makes possible prayer, as by faith God's grace manifests His forgiving love ever more wonderfully to the soul. Prayer is begotten of communion. It is so that the Spirit in this inner self teaches us how to pray, and for what. It is here at the centre of being that the cleansing power of the Spirit brings new motives new ideals, new and fragrant hopes into the soul which become the choicest flowers of Christian living.

This, of course, strikes to the heart of worldly religion. It says, in effect, that man can do nothing. His best is but receiving; his best is but manifesting what God has already done: all is the result of faith. Yet so profound is the effect that this communion has upon the soul that the love which begets faith engenders also the love which is the hall-mark of the Christian life. God creates faith by giving Himself, yet cannot be known save by faith. This is the mystery of faith.

So the communion that the Christian has with the Father in its origin is of God. It is in its nature salvation, for what more can man desire than communion with God? Yet this is the result of something that God has done, in Christ: He "suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God." At the same time this communion is ever

the goal of salvation. What the believer has already experienced is nothing compared to that which he can, or hopes to, know. The lure of communion with God is ever the motivating power which draws the soul still further and further up the heights with Christ. And at the same time, while communion originates in God and is the lure to God, it is also the means whereby we know ourselves to be the children of God. "There is the sweetness of all mercies in the consciousness of His Presence."

In quaint old-world language which enshrines the deepest of thought Owen says: "On whom He fixes His love it is immutable: it doth not grow to eternity, it is not diminished at any time" (Mal. iii. 6, James i. 17). By this he infers that the love of God which is experienced by every child of God is equal to the needs of every individual soul. That love is equally bent upon all men. It cannot be heightened by any act of ours, and cannot be lessened by anything in us. It is God's love coming into us. It is God Himself bequeathing Himself to us when, in communion with the Father, we taste the joy of sin forgiven and the fellowship which is beyond compare; we know that this is peculiarly our own. In this way every individual soul is of infinite worth to God. He died for all: He died for each. He loves each one, and He loves us for ourselves alone.

Yet while it is true that God's love is eternally the same, there is a sense in which it may seem to admit of change: because this love is fruitful, its communications are various. In his communion with the Father the Christian is well aware that there are variations of experience. Sometimes life seems light and strength is imparted; at other times life seems dead and he walks in darkness. It does seem that God dispenses His love differently at times. Yet it is always love. The disparity resides in our discoveries of it. "The sense we have

of it is dependent upon whether we have made possible His smile or have caused even His face to turn aside in grief." Still, His love is always the same.

From the moral point of view a real objection may arise in relation to this doctrine. Can it be that God loves His people in their sinning as in their strictest obedience? If so, why should there be effort, struggle, and how can there be moral achievement? The curious thing is that the answer is in the actuality. It is abundantly true that those who have the biggest concept of the love of God, in whose hearts and lives there is most markedly a communion with God, themselves, even in the variations of experience, evidence more and more the marks of a purified life. "The love of God in itself is the eternal purpose and act of His will." By this Owen means that the changelessness of God's love, in spite of all the wanderings of the human mind and life, and in spite of all the sin of human perversity, remains the permanent factor in human salvation. If this love could change, salvation would be impossible. Can it then be that God loves us when we sin? The reply is that He does love "us," but not our sin. To show that this is not moral equivocation Owen develops the thought: while God's love never alters and His purpose remains the same, the dispositions of His grace necessarily alter in accordance with the development or retrogression of the believer. The Christian cannot sin and enjoy God's love. The Christian cannot sin and commune with God; sin is paralysis within.

Upon this concept the Christian idea of God meets the challenge of the world. It is the highest concept possible. It conceives God as ever at work "upon" as well as "within" men. The acts of His grace are the results of His love, so when we sin not only is the communion broken but inevitable rebuke and chastening are invited. So it follows that God, being God, and

sin the violation of His law, punishment must ensue, and in its broken communion the soul senses His indignation. We know this to be direfully true. But we know it also to be true that if God should take away Himself from us we are indeed lost for ever. But He cannot deny Himself. Upon this great fact our eternal security depends. "Those very things which seem to be demonstrations of the change of His affections toward us do as clearly proceed from love as those which seem to be the most genuine issues thereof." As we ponder, we ask, will this give rise to sin? It is, in effect, the reply of sanctified intelligence to what is perhaps the greatest problem of the spiritual life.

Sin is the bar to true communion with the Father. How, then, can we commune but sin so frequently? In meeting this deepest of all questions regarding the continuity of communion with the Father, the inevitable and inexorable punishment of sin is seen to be as true an activity of the love of God as are His mercies. If God were not to punish sin He would be depriving the soul of any possibility of communion. From such abysmal apartness we can be brought nearer than we were before, and taught more deeply than we could ever otherwise know. God is as consistent in His punishment of sin, both in regard to His Holiness and love, as He is in His care for those whom He loves, even while they sin. His punishment deters from further trifling. His punishment sets us yearning for greater freedom. His punishment is borne by Himself, as those who trust Him, in Christ, know full well. Is this an easy doctrine? Does it seem, in effect, to encourage sin? "He never tasted the love of God that can seriously make this objection." The *doctrine* of grace may be turned to wantonness, the principle cannot. In this thought the Puritan is true to himself and to the truth as it is in Jesus. All is of grace. Love is always love, in its punishment

as in its ecstasy. The reality of the spiritual life can stand evil days. Communion with God can be depended upon to give the soul energy to rise with Him to newness of life, as well as peace to enjoy, with Him, the sweetness of intercourse.

Fellowship with the Father, while it may be broken by occasional lapses on our part, would always draw us away from sin, never lure us into it. The love of the Father is the basis of our fellowship, and is such that it will not desert us in our most needful hour. Forgiveness, innermost reality of communion, does not prompt to evil, but ever promotes good. It is not in us to be faithful without it. It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. It is He who is faithful to Himself, and to us, through it. The creative power of spiritual fellowship thus cannot be over-estimated. It is the urge of God's spirit within the soul toward God: it is indeed the entrance of God into the soul. Sin may cause God to alter His method, but never Himself. The effect in the life of any who love God is seen, not in their forsaking of this or that thing, but in their forsaking of themselves. For communion with the Father ever makes men like the Son whose revelation of His love is in the giving up of Himself.

Thus at the heart of the Christian life there is a great fellowship. This fellowship is of the soul with God. It is made possible by the faith men place in Jesus Christ as the One Mediator between God and man. It is dependent upon the love of God which ever seeks to win for Him man's complete devotion . It may be deterred, but is never defeated by sin. He is faithful and will not deny Himself of those whom He has created and re-created for Himself. Into this fellowship with Himself men enter in the Spirit through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is a fellowship with God the Father to whom we are brought by the Son. From this fellowship comes

the new life which He promises to those who are His. It can be urged, then, that for the individual believer there is a communion with the Father within the soul, which, no matter how stressful may be his circumstances, or how trying his temptations, remains for him the final fact of his experience. If life is indeed the knowledge of God, then for the Christian Jesus Christ does most when He brings him unto the Father. This is His claim. This He substantiates by bringing men, through Himself, to the One whom He delights to honour and obey. Thus, as the soul, resting in God and finding its delight in doing His will, communes with Him through Jesus Christ, it is lifted with Him into the secret place of the Most High.

Communion with Jesus Christ, the Son of God

The distinct fellowship that believers have with Jesus Christ is unique in this respect: He is the Mediator. To that office He submitted Himself for the sake of those who would believe (Gal. iv. 4, 5). Whatever fellowship men have with God they have through Him; whatever fellowship they have with Him they have because He is the Mediator.

The reality of this fellowship with Christ is fundamental in the Christian experience. "The Lord Christ, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father, who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, erects a spiritual house wherein He makes provision for the entertainment of those guests He so freely invites. His Church is the house." While this fellowship of the believer with Christ is a fact in his experience, and while it evidences to him the true Deity of Christ, this peculiar fellowship is also testified in many scriptures (Rev. iii. 20. Compare John xiv. 23). Christ is the Tree of Life—to use an image which is peculiarly suitable. He gives food for eternal life. He Himself said "I am that bread of life" (John vi. 48). He imparts righteousness to the believer (Matt. v. 6): He gives him shade and shelter from all the afflictions of the world.

What, then, we ask, is the peculiar kind of fellowship we have with Him? He is the Mediator of the new covenant, and the new covenant is of "grace." Grace is everywhere ascribed to Him, and always in terms of superabundant praise (John i. 14). That our com-

munion with Him is in grace is shown in this: "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John i. 16). This grace, which is an experience of God, is the indefinable quality of the Christian life. It is the great reality that makes of the Christian life, not our attainment but His bestowing—it is distinctly ascribed to Christ (2 Cor. xiii. 14). Grace is the motto of the Pauline epistles (2 Thess. iii. 17, 18). "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand which is the token in every epistle." And then the apostle continues: "so I write, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Yet he makes the term "the Lord Jesus Christ be with you" to be an equivalent expression. Sometimes these terms are used separately, sometimes together, some times in place of each other. So it is very evident that the way to view fellowship with Christ is peculiarly in grace. It is impossible to know Jesus Christ and to be unaware of grace.

His person is the excellence of grace. If charm is a corresponding term, it can hardly be better understood than in Christ. "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips" (Ps. xlv. 2). "Those inconceivable gifts and fruits of the Spirit which were bestowed upon Him and brought forth in Him concur to His personal excellency." Christ wins His way into the soul. His fascination is ever new to those who open their hearts to Him. He is indeed the living grace. This grace is manifested to men in free favour. We are accepted in Him. He gives grace, the Divine favour, to the humble (James iv. 6). He who in the days of His flesh poured out His soul unto death, yet in the beauty of His person attracted men and women of His own generation to Him, always woos and attracts, never threatens or condemns. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through Him might be saved" (John iii. 17).

The gifts of the Spirit, upon which we depend for daily living, are of His bestowing. It is the personal companionship of Jesus that gives assistance against temptation. It is the personal comfort of Jesus that is our solace in sorrow. His grace is ever most real to those who know Him.

In developing this subject of fellowship with Christ it must be remembered that this mediatorship is His peculiar function in salvation. The distinct fellowship we have with Him in grace does not refer to the grace of His Deity, or of His human nature. The supreme grace of Christ, that of spiritual eminence and beauty, is implicit in His office as mediator in the great work of bringing home saved ones. His personal excellency as Mediator rests upon His fitness to save. That fitness is the result of the uniting of the natures of God and man in one Person: He is able to save to the uttermost. This is the grace of union whereby He lays His hand on God (Zech. xiii. 7) and on man (Heb. ii. 14–16). Thus He becomes our "daysman" or "umpire." "Upon this account it was that He had room enough in His breast to receive, and power enough in His Spirit to bear, all the wrath that was prepared for us." This second Adam, because He is God and man, is able to mediate. So He deals with sin, which is only infinite because of its object, and its punishment infinite in respect of its subject, and He who becomes the subject of its condemnation because He is infinite can bear its punishment. The union which is the peculiar grace of Christ is the conjunction of two natures in one Person. There is a human nature in the Person of the Son of God, who has the true likeness of both natures in one Person (Acts xx. 28, and iii. 21). It is upon this fact that the ability of Christ to execute the office of mediator rests. The effects of this union give rise to a universality whereby Christ is able to meet all the needs of every

human life. This is grace indeed, and the result of this excellency is to endear Him to all who come to God by Him. Whatever may be our want it can be supplied in Christ. Life is found in Him (Col. iii. 4). Wisdom is also His (1 Cor. i. 30) : and relief from our guilt comes from Him, too (Jer. xxiii. 6). It is rightly said that only those who do not know Christ despise Him, for to know Him is to love Him. His grace is always sufficient. In fellowship with Him His people find fulness of joy. All the concerns of this life are nothing compared to the gifts He offers. For what do the concerns of this life offer, enquires John Owen. Let us see what peace, or quietness, or assurance come from them. On the other hand, the seeker after truth in religion, the one who would live the upward life, must ask himself this question : has Christ His true place?—for the grace that makes possible the glory of the saved life is the result of fellowship with Him. We need this communion with Him, for nothing can satisfy apart from it.

The question that arises is this : how can this distinct and personal fellowship with Christ be ours? In scripture it can be observed that this personal grace comes to men in a conjugal relationship (Can. ii. 16 ; Hosea ii. 19, 20). " Because He loved His Church He gave Himself for it " (Eph. v. 25), " despising the shame and enduring the Cross " (Heb. xii. 2), that He might enjoy His bride. It is, perhaps, the sweetest and most beautiful of all symbols used in scripture when the relationship between the believer and Christ is likened to that between a husband and wife. But how can this most holy union be attained? Who are those who enter into it? The answer is simple. The same faith that is directed toward God must be directed toward Christ. Indeed it can be argued that without faith in Christ faith in God is impossible : for those who enjoy this inner relationship must first believe (Matt. xii

49, 50). In coming to God we must first believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. And our Lord has said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." It is, therefore, clear that there is a distinct fellowship with the Son as with the Father. This fellowship in its nature is a most holy union which is the result of oneness in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ of man and God, which makes possible the mediatorship whereby God Himself, in the Person of His Son, comes to men. This gives rise to a fellowship so intimate that it is likened to that of husband and wife.

Intrinsic in such a holy relationship is the fact of mutual resignation. Here we enter into the Holiest of Holies. Here we taste something of the sweetness of mystical knowledge which comes to those to whom Christ is more dear than all else. This resignation is the making over of the persons of the ones beloved to one another. It is the first and consummating act of communion. In this reciprocal relationship Christ takes the initiative. He gives Himself to the soul. All His excellencies, all His preciousness, everything that grace means is poured into the soul when Christ becomes its Saviour. He who has become the Head and Husband of the Church becomes, also, the indweller of the believer. This is the first thing He does—He gives Himself to us.

As a necessary consequent of this there must be on our part a free and willing consent. Christ must be received. He must be welcomed. There must be ever renewing acts of consent in the deepening life of communion with Him. This complete self-resignation of Christ to the soul and the soul to Christ develops along two lines.

In our fellowship with Him there must ever be a simple, yet profound, *liking* of Him. We must learn to

prefer Him before everything and every one else. That is, perhaps, the way in which He most naturally wins His entrance into the soul. We are drawn to Him. But there must be, arising out of this, a continued *accepting* of Him by the will. "Receiving" Christ is not only intended for that solemn act whereby we once and for all close with Him, but also is determined by the constant attitude of our souls in abiding in Him. When the soul consents to take Christ on His own terms, to serve Him in His own way, it enters into communion with Him. This communion is found to be a definite appreciation of a living Person who, by the constraint of His will, subordinates our will, and by the impulse of His love uplifts our love.

In fellowship with Him we find our own lives filled gradually with Him, being brought ever more fully into an understanding of God, through Him. As in ever-deepening measure we become conscious of the grace we have in Christ, we become correspondingly aware of the love we enjoy in God, through Him.

The fellowship of the Christian with Christ is the consoling fact of his life. It has results which are far-reaching; from it emerge the peculiar characteristics of the Christian life. That this fellowship is deep and real is evidenced by the similarity of all Christian experience. "Christ having given Himself to the soul, loves the soul, and the soul having given itself to Christ loveth Him also." The results which arise from this fellowship are in accord with its nature. It is a fellowship between the Redeemer and the redeemed. The consequences of it reveal the fact that in this holy relationship Christ gives Himself to the believer. The first result of this new experience is delight. When Christ comes to the soul He brings to it a satisfaction, a sense of enjoyment, an inflowing of love.

Christ Himself delights in His people: "As the

bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa. xlii. 5). From all eternity His joy has been in those He redeems. The redemptive nature of God, for ever manifesting itself in the Eternal Son, delights in the compact of salvation. This is the eternal delight of the ever-living Son who rejoices to execute His trust. This is the innermost consolation of the Christian, for Christ reveals His secrets to His people. To them, in sweet intimacy and assurance, He opens His mind and enables them to reveal the secrets of their hearts to Him.

In this reciprocal relationship of delight Christ and His people share the fellowship of love. "It is only to a bosom friend to whom we will unbosom ourselves"; yet how deep is their knowledge, and what it means to them! To know Christ is to know the One through whom we come to God; the One in whom we experience our deepest spiritual joys; the One to whom we never turn in vain. This is the secret of Christ's mind made real to us.

From the human aspect this delight in fellowship must be positive by a daily committal of all to Him. Only as day by day the Christian commits his all to Christ can he have fellowship with Him. From that committal there comes the abiding peace which arises from the knowledge that He is ever with us. This gives rise to a serenity of soul that is the peculiar characteristic of the true believer: and with such serenity, in the peace which Christ supplies, the believer is able to judge the affairs of life, because having committed all to Him, and knowing daily the delight of His Presence, he willingly follows the path of obedience. "There is not anything in the heart of Christ wherein those friends of His are concerned that He doth not reveal to them." That is to say, our fellowship with Christ is the only real way in which we can know ourselves. He is the

mirror of the soul. He is the unveiler of the secret desires and intuitions of our hearts. He, in making bare Himself, makes bare ourselves. Christ knows the minds of all (John ii. 25). Our great consolation is this : that we can make our minds known to Him, and in this continued attitude of confession find the delight of a forgiveness which is ever fresh and ever effective.

In this delight of fellowship with Christ we need the assistance that comes from the initiative He takes. While we must open our souls to Him, it is His delighting Presence that gives to us all the assistance we need, for He is the Way, and in Him we can have boldness to tread the way. Our wants are known to Him, and as we draw near in the knowledge that He knows He teaches us that God knows also, and cares. " It is in Christ alone, and on account alone of His oblation and intercession, that we have any boldness to approach unto Him."

But our fellowship with Christ, which is His delight and ours, is the result, also, of His valuation of His people. For their sakes He was made flesh. There was an emptying of Himself for them (2 Cor. 8, 9). How high is the value He places upon His people can be judged by the extent of the price paid for it. He, who was equal with God, emptied Himself for the sake of those He loved. This equality is the standard of our value. No one but God can be equal to God. That which is Infinite is alone equal to the Infinite. It is the Infinite Son who is able so to yield Himself for those He values so. For their sakes He became obedient to death. Their price was above His life (Heb. ii. 14, 15). All that the universe could offer was nothing in comparison with His own. They are His inheritance.

In response to this the believer values Christ above all things and persons. " Christ and a Cross is infinitely sweeter than a crown and sceptre without Him to their

souls" : for the true believer values Christ above life, It is reported of Ignatius that, when led to martyrdom. he said "Let what will come upon me, only so may I obtain Jesus Christ." And all who, in their measure, follow in his steps know that there is something, Someone—they love more than themselves. In this regard it is well to remember that the true believer values Christ above all spiritual excellencies. Anything that hinders our approach to Him, anything that effaces His glory must be surrendered that His supreme value may be known.

In our fellowship with Christ, pity and compassion play an overwhelming part. As a man nourishes and cherishes his own flesh, so the Lord Jesus cares for the Church. It is deeply true that He had a *feeling* for His own in all their troubles (Eph. v. 29). He knows what their temptations mean. Every tremor of the body is registered at the heart. This fellow feeling can be expressed as "friendly grieving"; and in their innermost hearts believers know that when they sin or suffer Christ grieves over them. But it can also be "a gracious supplying," and they know, too, that from Christ alone there comes the supply of spiritual power whereby temptation can be endured, for Christ means everything to the moral life. He keeps the soul, which is liable to temptation, in that strong habitual bent whereby, in the moment of need, the reaction to righteousness is almost inevitable. From the very borders of sin He recovers us by some strong impulse of grace. Oftentimes, indeed, He removes the very temptation itself; more frequently, as we grow in grace, does He give us wisdom to understand its trend. Not only is His pity and compassion known in temptation's dreary hour, but in the afflictions which beset the believing life. He intercedes for relief from suffering, as for forgiveness for sin. His compassion is ever with those who need it.

Reciprocally, there must be from the believer a chaste affection to Christ. " This does he who hath communion with Christ, he watcheth diligently over his own heart that nothing creep into its affections to give it any peace or establishment before God, but Christ only."

This is indeed the basis of evangelical religion. This is the approach of the soul to God without any human aid. This is the response of the soul to God in Christ alone. In this John Owen interprets for all time the deepest concept of the inner life. Whatever tends to displace Christ, whatever militates against the supremacy of His position in relation to God must be cast out. Our relationship to Him must ever be of absolute fidelity, hence the need of continued fellowship with Him, for only through such fellowship can our loyalty be maintained. Only in such a spiritual atmosphere can the true growth of the soul be made possible. In fellowship with Christ the Christian knows the plentiful provision for every exigency. Christ is for him the Infinite Reservoir from which the living water comes. It " hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell " (Col. i. 19), and " of His fulness have we all received " (John i. 16). In every respect Christ's gift to the soul is of over-flowing measure. In pardoning mercy His giving is abundant (Isa. xlv. 7). We can come again and again to receive from Him pardon. In the spiritual indwelling He bestows abundantly upon His people that which He Himself enjoys to the full (Titus iii. 6). Grace to meet every need, grace which can fill the soul with such an overwhelming sense of His nearness He gives in abundance (Rom. v. 17). " Supplies from Christ fail not, but only when our faith fails in receiving them." It is sadly true that many Christian lives, by the paucity of their experience of Christ, fail to know the plentiful nature of this supply.

Yet it is very practical. It is enjoined upon all that they follow Him and practise holiness in the realisation of this power. As believers take for granted that it is there, and act upon that assumption, they have it. As they labour to abound in the fruits of holiness (1 Cor. xv. 58) they find that He gives what He has promised. In the fellowship of the inward life we must never be satisfied with present measures, but go forward to know Him whom to know is life eternal. These spiritual verities are consolations indeed, and can be enjoyed by all, and to the full, in fellowship with Jesus Christ.

The communion of the soul with Christ, the result of Christ's mediatorship, is the gift of grace. In this purchased gift of grace is summed up all that Christ has done for us; all that He works in us; and all that we enjoy in Him. While grace is the result of His mediatorship, it is by grace that we enter into fellowship with Him as mediator.

The gift of His grace in its origin is the result of the obedience of His life. In discussing this obedience, Owen draws a distinction between Christ's passive and active obedience. His complete actual fulfilling of the whole of every law of God had a two-fold aspect.

On the one hand, the habitual righteousness which is His as mediator in His human nature was the exact conformity of the soul of Christ to the will of God. This passive obedience, the result of Christ's nature in which He rests in eternal filiation with God, is that from which spring all the acts of obedience manifested in His life. "The human nature of Christ subsists in the Person of the Son of God; and so hath the bottom and fountain of its holiness in strictest unity with itself." From this Owen infers that between Father and Son there is such love as always manifests itself in the complete obedience of Christ, and from this grace comes the possibility of redemption to mankind.

On the other hand, the actual obedience of Christ was His willing, cheerful performance of everything that God requires. Whatever any law required He fulfilled as the act of His own will (Gal. iv. 4). He owned of Himself that He came to do the will of God, and He did it. Further, in the peculiar law of His mediatorship, that law which applies to Himself alone, and which is not for our imitation, He was completely obedient. Here we probe the mysteries of grace indeed, for this obedience led Him to a death none could share or know (John x. 18). Between this passive and active obedience there was perfect accord; consequently, when He prayed as Mediator, His Father always heard and answered (John xi. 41), and from that prayer comes the possibility which is made actual in salvation. For the result of His gift of grace is our free acceptance with God.

That a mediator is necessary between God and man we are well aware. Because of His righteousness Christ was able and "fit to do all that He had to do for us." For this grace welling from the soul of Christ in God, made possible by the obedience of His life and death for us, is reckoned graciously to us. As He lived not for Himself, so He died not for Himself, but for His people. His active obedience was not because He needed to be fitted: that was done by His habitual righteousness, but because we needed to be saved. There is indeed a sense in which this obedience is distinct from His suffering. Doing is one thing, suffering another. Christ, in yielding perfect obedience to the law for us, freed us from it.

The question inevitably arises: how far does He free us from attempting to do anything in our own strength, or from striving to win the life everlasting? For the greatest impact His grace makes upon the soul is in taking away the guilt of sin. This is indeed accept-

ance. This is the basis of the gift of grace. He makes it possible for us to receive it.

This, then, is that from which springs our communion with Christ—the purchased grace of His death and oblation. This is the heart of His mediatorial function.

It was a price (1 Cor. vi. 20) He alone could pay. Our deliverance is from God, through Christ, for it is to God we owe "our debts" (Matt. vi. 12). Yet it is from God, in Christ, that we receive deliverance from bondage (Ps. li. 4). Our sin in its essence is rebellion against Him; our pardon in its nature is a gift from Him, which He is entitled to give because He Himself has paid the price. There is no injustice with God. There is no unwillingness with Christ to suffer, "the Just for the unjust," to bring us to God.

This price was a sacrifice (Heb. x. 10). In the whole of His human nature He was an offering for sin, an offering which, in virtue of His eternal nature, could alone be commensurate with sin. From such atonement comes reconciliation. As sin breaks the relationship between God and man, grace restores the friendship by a gift which only God could give. For this sacrifice, the price of Christ's willing obedience to death, is His bearing of our punishment. This punishment is the definite giving of satisfaction to the one offended. That is what scripture teaches in its doctrine of the bearing of sin (Deut. xix. 15, xx. 17; Ezek. xviii. 20). All that justice can desire He bears, for justice can desire no more than a proportional punishment, and this, on His own voluntary undertaking as our Mediator, was inflicted on our dear Lord. This is a gift of grace, the greatness of which we can never estimate, but into the privilege of which we can, by faith, enter; for He does not leave us, having saved us, He follows up His work to the uttermost.

In His intercession He continually gives of Himself

for men by " appearing in the Presence of God for us " (Heb. ix. 24). Not only so, but by procuring the Holy Spirit effectually to bestow upon His people the promised grace He makes actual in them all that God would bestow through Him. In this way we enter into the nature of the grace He gives.

As our acceptance with God is the primary gift of His grace our life in God is the effect of His grace. " To this end are His sufferings reckoned : for, being " made sin for us " (2 Cor. v. 21), He is made righteousness unto us." Our life with Christ in God is not only a " non-imputation of sin " that is ours when the guilt of it is removed; but it is a " reckoning of righteousness." This becomes ours as, by His Spirit, we enter ever more deeply into the fellowship of His sufferings. What an astonishment of grace, that He should stoop so low to lift us so high ; that being accepted by God in Him, we should have fellowship with God through Him !

For the grace which we have in Christ is our sanctification. " He makes us not only accepted, but acceptable : He doth not only purchase love for His saints, He also makes them lovely." In the process of this sanctification all the wealth of Christ's fellowship with the believer is lavished upon him. As He removes our defilement and makes it possible for us to come to God, so by the continued gift of Himself to us He lifts our moral life stage by stage to the standard of His own.

This is the result of grace. He calls that He may keep. He cleanses that He may infill. Our very natural tendency to sin is counteracted by grace which is ever given to cleanse and satisfy (Tit. iii. 3-5). This work of faith in fellowship with Christ is no non-moral thing—such could never satisfy the Holy God. By grace He shows us ourselves and our sin, cleanses us from guilt and clothes us with Himself, and actually alters our living. For His grace is Himself. In our fellowship with

the Mediator we experience in a measure His very life. So it is that the Spirit of Holiness dwells within us (1 Cor. i. 30), for grace creates a new principle of life—it becomes an actual power, a positive putting into action of something hitherto unknown. The understanding is lightened and we are able to judge between good and evil. The will is strengthened and we are bent upon His obedience. The affections are kindled till something of His life touches our lives. In all, faith is found to be the function of the soul, the life of our life, the power by which every spiritual duty can be performed. For the innermost privilege that the grace of Christ bestows is that we might stand before God. By Him we enter. With Him in adoption we become sons. By the favour of Christ we become heirs of eternal life and know what it means to have fellowship with Him. He alone can bring us to God because He alone can give us the grace of forgiveness. He alone can keep us ever with God, for He only can maintain within us that spiritual life which is His life within the soul. Our fellowship with Him is our first taste of that grace which wins in order that it may bring back to itself that which was lost.

With the acceptance of the believer in God, through the mediatorship of Christ, it follows that sanctification must result. This is the peculiar characteristic of life in Christ. Communion with Him is distinctly the way to true sanctity of living, yet those who know Him most realise that this also is a gift. It is imputed to those who trust Him. Sanctification is grace. While it is the effect, and should be the corollary, of salvation, it is given to those who will accept it. We hold communion with Christ in holiness as well as in righteousness, for He bestows upon those who are His, His own nature. Our approach to God the Father is through God the Son, yet our fellowship with Him is distinct in its nature and result.

This distinction is our sanctification. We are "accepted" in Him: we are also "sanctified" in Him. In this Christ manifests Himself to the soul as an independent factor in salvation. He contributes of His own life to His people's welfare. What he is becomes that which they are. As all communion is two-sided, so there is a part that He plays as well as our own. He is ever giving Himself, in a manner peculiar to Himself, to those who trust Him. He is ever bent upon a complete oneness between Himself and His own. "In bringing many sons to glory" He brings them, through Himself, to the Father.

In this, His intercession with the Father that the Holy Spirit should be bestowed upon us, is the first requisite of the sanctified life. "He is the undertaker on the part of God and man also to give satisfaction to God, to bestow the whole grace of the promise" (Heb. ix. 15). This giving of Himself in prayer for His own vindicates His own nature, which is bent upon the reclamation of His people, and assures us of that development without which salvation would be meaningless. He prays that the work He begins His Spirit may finish. He promises His disciples that He will pursue the work on their behalf (John xiv. 16-18). And He intercedes for the Spirit. He does not pray that God should love mankind, that He does already, and from this love everything else springs, "For God so loved that He gave." The Son Himself is the gift of the Father. He prays for the fruit of love, which is the Spirit. His intercession with the Father that He may bestow the Spirit on us as the fruit of His death, is the means of our sanctification. We grow in grace because the very life of Christ, through prayer, enters into us. He is ever desirous of making His people partakers of all good things; therefore, having received the Holy Ghost (Acts ii. 33) He sheds Him abroad on His own. In this act of intercession faith

receives that for which He prays. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God," and in this reception of the Spirit the believer enters the pathway of new life.

Christ's prayer being granted, for the Father hears Him always, He actually sends His Spirit into the hearts of His saints. This alone is how the Christian faces life. There is, for him, the consciousness that within his life is a power making toward holiness greater than himself. The Holy Spirit given as it were into the hand of Christ is given, through Him, to His people. The Father will give the Comforter (John xiv. 16) so Christ prays, but He Himself does so (John xv. 26). In this act in which the Father and the Son are both involved we have that which comes from God, through Christ, to us. "He will furnish Him with that which is His to bestow upon them: 'He shall take of Mine' (for the Holy Spirit is properly and solely mediated to the world by grace) 'and give it unto you.'"

This gift of the Spirit, which is the peculiar result of the Christian's communion with Christ, is the cause of all holiness and sanctification: in fellowship with Christ the life is quickened, lightened, and purified by the incoming of what John Owen terms *habitual* grace.

The fruit of the Spirit is that which is born of the Spirit (John iii. 6). In opposition to the "flesh," the "spirit" is that which is begotten in us by the Holy Spirit. This "new" spirit is the faith, love, hope, joy and all the other graces of the gospel. It is the new life, Christ Himself within the soul. In considering this new life, it is well to remember that though particular graces are mentioned they are not distinct qualities. The new spiritual principle of life is one. The "new man" rises out of the death of the "old man." While a man is born again, there is a continuity of personality.

He is a new creature in Christ, but has risen out of death into fulness of life.

Further, this habitual grace is different from occasional incursions of the Spirit. It is a new, gracious spiritual principle of life, which changes faculties and affections, and fits the new nature for obedience (2 Cor. v. 17). Fellowship with Christ brings to the soul illumination, for the mind taught by Him discerns spiritual things in a spiritual manner (Eph. v. 8). From this illumination comes faith. The vision He gives to the soul wins its adherence in faith. The whole personality closes with the offer of Christ; as it were it bows itself to His will. In so doing it learns to love Him, and finds with Him a rest and a delight of soul nothing else can give. It is true that in this regard faith is felt to be the dominating factor, but in fellowship with Christ light, and love, and faith mingle in the act of devotion.

The habitual grace of the Spirit, which is in effect the new creature in Christ, is different from the Spirit dwelling in us. It is a created quality. It has no existence outside itself. A subtle yet necessary distinction is that which must be drawn between those who are of the Spirit but who are not the Spirit. Habitual grace becoming the very quality of the new life, remains so. We remain ourselves, although continually indwelt by Him.

Even more so is it well to remember that actual graces, these transient influences which from time to time come in moments of crisis to the soul for a specific purpose, are different from that inward life which they serve to sustain and protect (2 Cor. iii. 5).

The sanctified life, which is the habitual grace Christ bestows, is capable of waning or growing. In some it is more evident than in others.

This new life of the soul, like the Spirit by whom it is brought into being, is the purchase of Christ. " Were

not grace by them procured," Owen says with reference to the oblation and intercession of Christ, "it would never by any one soul be enjoyed." For he continually asserts that all that Christ is, and all that He gives to His people, is founded upon that which He Himself has suffered for His people (1 John ii. 1, 2). It is in virtue of this that the Father actually invests Him with all grace in bringing many sons to glory. It is in virtue of this that He is able to give eternal life to His elect (John xvii. 2). It is His right. He is the Head of the body. In the furtherance of His spiritual purpose He designs the Spirit to take the fulness which is in Him and give it to us. "He shall take of Mine and show it unto you" (John xvi. 15).

So untiringly does He care for His people that He intervenes in *actual* grace to perform particular duties according to our needs.

This, then, is fellowship from the aspect of the Lord Jesus. All that He has done, and still does, all that He ever will do is that men might be saved and brought to a knowledge of the truth. He Himself, in fellowship with them, leads them into the larger life of unbroken fellowship. What is the part we play? At first, little; just as the dead bones had to wait for the breath to come upon them: as Lazarus in the grave awaited Christ's call; so "in passive reception of the life-giving gracious Spirit and power" we can but take that which He gives; for His call is ever accompanied by life and power. As the primary work of redemption is the result of His Spirit, so the further efficacy of the Spirit and increase of grace, both habitual and actually, is the means whereby we become more holy. Holiness, like all true forms of life, can never be superimposed from without, but must spring up from within. As we have communion with Christ and learn to think His thoughts and know His will, the tenor of life is altered. As His blood is realised

to be not only atonement but purification (Heb. ix. 13-14) so we enter, daily, into an appreciation of all that His sacrifice means to those who will accept the gift. For in fellowship with Him we realise not only the guilt of sin, but the defilement of it. This is a growingly spiritual discovery. This follows every conviction. As we scrutinise our lives with His eyes we see—and it is the only means of seeing—what defilements there are. It is here that faith must play its greatest part, for trust in Him involves not only forgiveness for guilt of sin that is past, but also conquest over defilements that remain.

The mind that ponders upon the will of Christ forgets that which He would have it forget, and remembers those things which serve as stepping stones. The will that seeks to do His will finds, also, the power to do, or not to do, whatever means life or death. The affections, caught by a glamour higher than anything that earth can know, make it possible for men to love Him by whom they are so truly loved. "One moment's communion with Christ by faith herein is more effective to the purging of the soul, to the increasing of grace than the utmost self-endeavours of a thousand years." For fellowship with Christ ever leads us to understand more of His free promises (2 Cor. vii. 1). We know that not only in Him can we find grace, but that such grace becomes our strength. He is faithful that promised. Sanctification is the right life, the good life in which the Christian attains his true balance. As a practical passion it shows itself in the life of the believer as a continued desire toward better and nobler living. By His gift of the Spirit Christ creates the longing to be like Himself, and meets it. By continually fanning the flame of faith and love the habit of holiness is engendered. In actual assistance which He gives, He enables the believer to know His very Presence in the soul and in the life. Thus, while it is all of His giving it seems to be, and

rightly so, of our doing. Without this there can be no performance of those acts whereby God is glorified. As Christ lives within the soul the soul lives, and this sanctified living increasingly becomes the true principle of being, the root of all obedience. To know that He is praying that salvation may become effectual in our lives; to know that within our souls He lives, and we in Him; to feel in every eventuality His conscious Presence; lifts the believer into a communion of light and love with Christ in God.

The most intimate and glorious of all the effects of this new relationship into which the believer enters in Christ is termed in the scripture "adoption." It is this that makes possible the life of sanctification; it is this that is the final work of grace; it is the direct result of communion with Christ. Only as believers are united for ever with Christ is it possible for them to become the children of God. Adoption into the family of God is both the means of grace and the result of it. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (1 John iii. 2).

This sonship is the result of Christ's power. It is the authoritative translation of a believer from the family of the world to the family of God. In this innermost experience of grace our communion with Christ is everything. What He means to us determines what we become through Him. Our standing in God is made possible by our adoption through Christ. In fellowship with Him we are invested with all the privileges and advantages of God's family. How real this is to the believing life can only be estimated by those who experience it. How rich is this experience of grace can only be understood by those who know Him, "Whom to know is life eternal."

This reaches to the roots of Christian living. We must be members of His family before we can live as He would have us live.

Even further, we must be members of one family or another: we are dwelling either "in the world" or "in Him." It is the privilege of the sanctified life to live up to all the possibilities of the family into which it has been adopted. Communion with Christ makes real to the redeemed soul the redemptive purpose of grace. In this new life of adoption Christ is the beginning and the end.

In rising to the heights of this mystical experience it is well to remember that the New Testament teaching is itself the setting forth of an experience; at the same time it evidences the continuity of an historical development. What the believer is he sees shadowed forth in the types of the Old Testament, and understands clearly in the teaching of the New. What John Owen means by "adoption" combines both the experience and the statement of it.

He lays down, first of all, that the believer is actually, and of his own right, a member of another family than that into which he is adopted (Eph. ii. 3). By this he means that there is a very definite state out of Christ. This is the bedrock of evangelical religion: to be out of Christ is to be out of the family of God. This is no merely negative thing: it is to belong to another family. The solemn words of our Lord, "Ye are the children of your father, the Devil" holds terrible meaning in the light of such teaching. That is why it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the family into which he is "grafted" is not his by right (Eph. iii. 15): all is of grace. We can lay no claim upon God: we are not fit to enter His Kingdom. Not only by the habit of sin but by its practice, yes, by the very perversion of our own will are we unable to enter into His Kingdom in our own strength.

Our adoption is the work of God. It is He who not only breaks the silence in revelation, but breaks the

continuity of sin by lifting man out of it. There is the intervention by His power in the life of man whereby man is translated " into the new life " (John i. 12).

This being so he is freed from the obligations of that from which he comes : sin hath no more dominion over him. Its penalty, also, is annulled. In virtue of his adoption he is invested with the privileges of the new family. From these privileges, owing to the fact that the family of God is composed of those who are His, come graces which adorn the Christian life. These graces are the fruits of the Spirit in life : for the believer is himself conscious of his translation. Of whatever else he may be unaware one thing he knows, that he himself belongs to Christ. This deep consciousness of abidingness is the testimony of the believer to the work of Christ within the soul. And from this springs the sense of freedom from sin's obligation, and adoption into God's family that marks the new life.

In communion with Christ the new creature grows in the knowledge of grace, which is sanctification, because by grace he has been adopted by the Giver of Grace. In this life of adoption four things assume permanence.

The first is liberty. Christ proclaimed liberty to the captives (Isa. lxi, 1), and " where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty " (2 Cor. iii. 17). Whatever spiritual liberty is enjoyed by the Christian is the result of the spirit of adoption. Whatever is alien to that spirit is licentiousness. In drawing this distinction between liberty and licentiousness Owen asserts the fact that truth is always reliable ; grace can be depended upon never to err ; love never becomes lust. The saved soul, simply because it is saved, must ever journey upward ; not accumulating goodness, but becoming good ; not learning more of itself, but more of Christ ; not wishing to enjoy more of life, but to express more of Him. This new sense of liberty which

we have in Christ brings with it a realisation of freedom from the law and sin. There is a very real claim which the law has over human life, for the moral law is unchangeable, and the result of breaking it is death. But in the new life of adoption the law, kept perfectly by Christ, is imputed to the believer, and in developing measure realised in him. Its pretended claims, which are merely man's ordinances, are blotted out (Col. ii. 14). The liberty we enjoy in Christ makes us free from the law of sin and death because, on the one hand, its pretended claims are obliterated, its real claims fulfilled. In the family of God truth alone matters. He who is the Truth becomes our life. Moreover, there is liberty in the family of God: saints are free: their obedience is a free obedience. It is "a spiritual largeness of heart whereby the children of God do freely, willingly, genuinely, without fear, terror, bondage and constraint go forth unto all holy obedience in Christ." These are the principles of service. This is the new life of love, "Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). He brings power to live unto God. The very manner of living alters. So, then, the believer, living the sanctified life into which he has been adopted by Christ, enjoys liberty which only Christ can give, for He has freed us from the bondage of law, and by His grace enables us to live unto holiness.

In this new life of adoption Owen defines, further, the title in which the child of God stands: he has a right of entry. In virtue of Christ's merit he knows himself to be secure. The verities of the spiritual life are not ephemeral, they are enduring. The qualities which communion with Christ brings are lasting: they give rise to a permanent relationship between God and man. They are the "habit of faith." The very nature of this new family of God is that it is composed of those who have been born again. It is only in virtue

of this that they themselves are fitted to enjoy the fellowship of Christ. They are described as "living stones" (1 Peter ii. 5): a "chosen generation" (1 Peter ii. 9): "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. i. 1). Their title to belong to Him is Himself. It might be noted that even Owen is constrained to admit that others creep in unawares (Jude 4). So in this great household of faith there are "vessels of wood and of earth" (2 Tim. ii. 20): but nevertheless the title which Christ gives to the redeemed communing soul brings with it privileges, for such a soul not only communes with God, but mediates God. We not only live in Him, but we live Him. We not only enjoy Him, but we can enable others to do so, for the fulness of the inheritance of the saints in light is that they become heirs of God. The power of sin having been broken, the continuity of grace is assured. That is His promise (Heb. iv. 17): such is our righteousness (Heb. xi. 7), for our salvation is all of Him (Heb. i. 14).

The third effect of the adopted life is boldness with God. He who gives us forgiveness gives us a holy daring. In lifting us to Himself He creates within us the yearning for more of Himself. This spiritual boldness, while it humbles, lifts. The saint is at one and the same time in fear and great courage; he knows that so great is God's mercy that He would have him come "boldly to the Throne of Grace." Without losing the sense of awe that the Presence of God always gives he can speak to Him as a "man speaketh with his friend." Thus the soliloquy of the soul becomes not only supplication, but intercession; not only adoration, but a holy anticipation of all that God can give. Having completely lost confidence in himself, the believer is bold in his communion with Christ, for he knows that it is the will of Christ that His grace should ever be sufficient.

In communion with Christ the new law of grace which leads to the sanctified life and enables us to pass from death to life enables us, also, to share with Him His suffering. The life of adoption is not released from suffering, but refreshed in it. Sanctification, while imputed by grace, is often imparted by sorrow (Heb. xii. 3–6). In this the servant is not above his Lord.

In this fellowship of His sufferings the true worth of the new life is emphasized, for it is ever sweetened by His Presence. It is communion with Christ not only in the inner life of prayer, meditation, doubt and faith, but in the outer life of danger, difficulty, sorrow and disappointment that we experience in Him a companionship that reaches to the depth and fills our whole being. His Presence is indeed not merely the compensation for all, but the comfort in all. In this the Puritan wrote truly: "It is communion with Christ in heart that makes men like Him in life."

This is the result and aim of sanctification. This is the evidence of our fellowship with Him. He in whom we come to God the Father takes us to the Father in Himself. Our faith in Him, and our communion with Him, far from militating against our faith in the Father, and communion with Him, enables us to enjoy both more fully. In both, the *principle* of communion is the same. It is always as the just live by faith that they enter into fellowship. It is always as they accept from Him the gift of sonship that they experience with Him the joy of communion. Into this communion with the Father Jesus Christ would have us enter, and into this communion we can enter as we know first the nearness and sweetness, and trust with faith, even though it trembles, the One who, in the family of God, is our Great Elder Brother.

Communion with the Holy Spirit

In the inner life of the Christian he is aware not only of a communion with God the Father and with the Son, but also of a communion with the Holy Spirit. This communion of necessity partakes of the nature of that which we have with the Father and with the Son, and yet is peculiar to itself. The Christian is aware that there is a Spirit, a Life, a personal Power within himself with whom he has fellowship, who yet leads him into fellowship with Jesus Christ by whom he comes to God.

While, upon the basis of scripture, it can be clearly seen that such a Spirit was promised by Christ, and had indeed been experienced before the coming of Christ, it is uniquely true that the evidence of such a Spirit arises from His life within the soul. In the Old Testament it can be seen that such a Spirit came from time to time upon those whom God would use for His glory. Before Lord Jesus Christ had come to call to Himself a peculiar people there were those who, in varying fashion, received the Holy Spirit. He abode upon them, used them perhaps for a while, and then departed. Many of the Psalms witness to this truth. So David cries, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

It may well be asked whether it is just to draw a distinction between the kind of fellowship the believer has with the Holy Spirit and that which he has with the Father and with the Son.

In what respect is our communion with the Holy Spirit different? Here indeed we touch the deeps of

spiritual experience. Pursuing with care an enquiry into that deposit of truth by which we must always judge and value our experiences, we enter into the mysteries of God's word. The inwardness of this communion is peculiarly the possession of the Christian. While, as can be shown, there are gleams in the Old Testament, it was after Christ laid down His life for sin that it was possible for the Spirit to come into the believing heart.

This incoming as far as the believer is concerned, that is with reference to his communion with the Spirit rather than his birth by the Spirit, points to the peculiar mission of the Spirit.

His mission in the life of the believer is one of consolation. That the Holy Spirit has a definite mission is shown by Jesus Christ in John xvi, where He alludes specifically both to the work of the Holy Spirit in the world and His work *in* the believer. After He had given direful warning of what would follow His departure He strengthened His followers by reassuring them of His greater gift: for they might well have questioned their ability to endure the things that would befall: they might well have asked why was it that the Saviour at this juncture should add terror to their confusion: they might even ask why He did not tell them at the beginning that He would leave them, or why at the beginning He did not also promise them His Spirit.

The reason was that while He was with them He could, and did, protect them. "It is expedient for you," He said, "that I go away, for if I go not away the Spirit will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you." This is a key verse. There is in it the emphatic indication of the purpose of Christ's death and the mission of the Holy Spirit.

The emphasis is upon the personal pronoun. It is the Lord who loves His disciples, and will love them

to the end. He has always taken care of them: He will now lay down His life for them. He gives to them in His dying words a promise that may be their consolation. He who is the Truth promises a gift.

In the assertion of this promise there is a negative and a positive aspect. The withdrawal of His bodily Presence alone makes possible the fulfilment of the promise which He lays down in Matt. xxviii. 20 to be with them to the end. Yet positively it is declared to be useful to His disciples: "If I go not away He will not come, but if I depart I will send Him." He thus calls His disciples to a faith in Himself beyond that which was made possible by His bodily Presence. He bids them look away from the seen to the Unseen. He prepares them for that adventure of faith in which He will still be the Guiding Star, but within their hearts He lifts their spiritual gaze to the possibility of a life lived for God, who is Spirit, made possible by their life within the Spirit.

He thus pursues the plan of salvation. God, in bringing man to Himself, can only do so by giving them Himself. He who is Love, He who of His grace gives to men the love they could never otherwise know, consummates the gift: this is the gift of the Spirit.

It is shown in the scripture from two points of view—The Holy Spirit is "the Advocate." In this respect His work is outlined with great clearness in John xvi. 8–11. Of that work we say nothing here. We are concerned with the other point of view in which we see the Holy Spirit as the "Comforter."

This is His peculiar mission to believers. He does not comfort the world—He convicts it: He does not comfort those who are without Christ—He reproves them of sin because they believe not in the Saviour. But to those who, in faith, have responded to His insistent demand, and have acknowledged Christ as their

Lord, He comes in different guise. With them he deals gently. For them He provides sweeter blessings than they have ever known. In them He fulfils the promises of Christ. Through all the changes of their lives He comforts.

This is indeed the limit of God's giving. He reveals all truth to men, for He is the Spirit of Truth (John xv. 26). Of Him Christ says two things—first, that He shall come: secondly, that He shall send Him.

In the mystery of His sending Christ instructs His disciples by degrees. In John xiv. 16 He says, "I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter." The Holy Spirit is here seen as the gift of the Father, but in verse 26 our Lord affirms that the Father will "send" Him "in My Name." Still again in John xv. 26 He says, "I will send Him from the Father." The teaching rises to its height in chapter xvi. 7, where He says, "I will send Him." This personal procession of the Spirit is seen, then, to be from the Father and from the Son. This demonstrates beyond all fear of contradiction the eternity and equality of the Father and the Son, and at the same time the oneness of the Spirit with the Father and the Son. But as far as believers are concerned in their experience of Him the teaching is simple. It is as though Christ affirmed that it is better and more profitable for believers that after He had offered Himself once for sin He should endue them with His own Spirit. Taken from them He still lives in them. It is by means of this enduement that their communion with the Father and the Son is possible.

Yet this enduement is of itself a distinct form of communion. While in origin the Spirit "proceedeth from the Father" (John xv. 26) and "from the Son" (John xvi. 7) He carries out of His own will a mission in every Christian life, for He is living. The will of the Spirit is in His work. He comes forth of Himself.

There is no sense of inferiority in the fact that He is given by the Father and the Son; He submits to this procession "to do a work as Comforter just as the Son submits, also willingly, to do the work of a Redeemer." For while the purpose of the Father is the origin of salvation and His elective love is that source from which redemption springs, otherwise it were impossible for men to have communion with Him in love, it is the work of the Son that by grace they might have communion with Him in God. It is also the work of the Spirit that they should have consolation with Him in the Father and the Son.

We are told that He is "given" (John xiv. 16): that shows the freeness of the gift. This gift is everywhere the portion of the believing heart. He is given and must be received as a gift. "He will *give* His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." As men cannot win for themselves salvation, neither can they win for themselves the gift of the Spirit. If they would enter into communion with the Holy Spirit they have but to receive Him. "The Spirit of grace is given of grace." We are to rejoice in the Comforter who is willing to come.

There is, however, a very real sense in which, for the purpose of redemption, He is sent by the Father and the Son (John xiv. 26: compare xv. 26 and xvi. 7). The mission of the Spirit is made possible because He so submits Himself. "It is the office of the Holy Spirit to be an Advocate for us and a Comforter to us, in which respect, not absolutely, He is thus sent authoritatively by the Father." This is why the sin against the Holy Ghost is declared by Christ to be so heinous, for in sinning against the Holy Spirit man sins against the authority of the Trinity. It is as though he blasphemes heaven's holiest law: it is as though he challenges the highest: it is as though, in the stridency of his unbelief, he befouls the purity of God Himself. "It is a sin

against the recapitulation of the love of the Father, Son and Spirit."

The awfulness of this thought is countered by the remembrance that we are to pray the Father and the Son to give the Holy Spirit to us (Luke xi. 13). We can only pray for Him as He prays through us. His mission within the soul of the believer is to make prayer possible.

In communion with Him the saved soul learns the meaning of trust: so we must never grieve Him (Eph. iv. 30) because all that we can ever know of God is through Him. The singular paradox is that, while we can only believe as we receive the Spirit, we can only receive Him as we have faith.

His communion in the life of the believer enables us to benefit by the promises of God (Eph. i. 13, Gal. iii. 14). He makes the promises effective in life. By His life within us He enables us to live as those who, not having seen, love.

By His life within the soul He teaches men to pray. "He is given as a Spirit of Supplication that we may ask Him as a Spirit of Consolation." For as men commune with the Spirit they find the power to act upon His promptings. It is the life lived in the power of this inner fellowship that finds it possible to do as He directs. The security of the believer is made possible by his communion with the Spirit who abides with us for ever.

There is a vital distinction to be drawn, however, between His work in the believing life as Sanctifier and Comforter. His very presence is our sanctification. He who comes from the Father and the Son enables Christ to live in us, and by His Presence makes of our personality the temple of God. But it does not always follow that those who are being sanctified are alert to all that is involved by the presence of the Spirit in their lives. "The Spirit of Sanctification dwells in us always

and it is therefore impossible that we should lose utterly our holiness." God will not deny Himself. The Potter continually moulds the clay, and in the end will shape it according to His will. It is true that He abides in us, but it does not always follow that we receive His comfort.

The Holy Spirit of Himself would bring consolation and the sense of God's nearness to us. Yet so often because God's children fret in their own hearts, and because they do not permit Him to take full charge of their concerns, and because they do not avail themselves of this proffered consolation, He is not always a Comforter to them. It is not that His nature as Comforter ever changes, but that our appreciation of His Presence, and what it means, varies. Often the tender consolation that He offers we will not receive. While in the process of sanctification He endues us with power and we avail ourselves of it, as Comforter He would bring sweetness, and that we do not always enjoy.

The Puritan, however, pondering this sad yet constant state of the human heart, cleaves to the thought that the Holy Spirit never leaves the soul without some consolation. His very Presence, in itself, preserves within us that which in our hour of need stands us in good stead. The soul in respect of consolation "may be darkened, clouded, feel numb, yet the possibility is always present."

In developing the thought of the believer's communion with the Holy Spirit as a receiving of consolation, we may well ask in what way does He work, and how?

It is necessary to distinguish between the actings of the Spirit and their results. Within the renewed life He is said "to work effectually" (1 Cor. xii. 11). In this we see again a proof of His Deity. What He is said to do as the Spirit He is said to do as God; as a

comparison of the preceding passage with Eph. i. 11 will show. " What we have, then, from Him, we have by way of His energetical working." This consolation that the believer receives from Him means that there is always the possibility of new endeavours within the Christian life. The gift and graces of the Christian life spring from His presence. He is not the gift which He gives, but He makes it possible. He is not what the believer becomes, but without Him the believer could never become.

It is so that He gives or " divides " to everyone as He will. " Thus are the saints in His Sovereignty kept in constant dependence upon Him." The Christian in his communion with the Holy Spirit knows that what he is, is not of himself. While his gifts are given to him they are in trust. He increasingly feels that what he is enabled to do is done by One greater than himself. Knowing full well that of himself he can do nothing, he is forced back ever in utter dependence upon the Spirit's power.

This is the source of true Christian resignation. It is no passive thing : he willingly accepts at God's hands His behests, for he will be content if in his soul he is assured by the Spirit that God's will for him is clear.

On the other hand, why should he be proud when all that he does and is comes from the Spirit? For the Spirit *gives* what He bestows. There is a very real personal activity within the life of every believer. The regenerative purpose of God is continued by the consoling activity of the Spirit. This is His work; and because He is God it is a work of grace. " The acting of no one Person doth prejudice the freedom and liberty of the other " : that is to say, as the love of God is free, unmerited, unbought, and as the Son of His own will lays down His life freely, so the Spirit in giving consolation gives it freely.

The will of God ever shows itself in its ultimate nature, which is love. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, in varied activities, bent upon the complete reclamation of the soul, reveal the fact that in the acting of One there is the counsel of all.

Thus it is that in this communion which we have with the Holy Spirit, we have communion with the Father and the Son in having communion with Him. It is nevertheless true that in this respect the whole aspect of our communion with the Holy Spirit is as Comforter. Our communion with Him is not as the Sanctifier. We have communion with Him as He becomes the light and vigour of our life in Christ; for the limit of our responsiveness to Him determines the extent of our communion with Him. Into a life of comfort such as man can never otherwise know, communion with God the Holy Spirit will bring us. From this comfort within the soul springs the fruits of a life lived in conformity to the will of God through the Spirit, for "the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Greater comfort than this no man can ever know.

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Comfort, then, is one of the essential needs of the Christian life. Amid all trouble and disappointment, realising how frequently he falls from his own ideal, the Christian needs something within himself to give him comfort and strength. It was comfort that the Lord Jesus brought to His disciples in the days of His flesh. It *is* comfort that the Holy Spirit still gives to those in whom He lives. So Christ speaks of Him as the One who shall "make you mind all these things." It is true that in the deepest sense by His inspiration apostles were able to speak for the good of the Church (2 Cor. i. 21), in the natural course of events they would forget so much, but by the inward ministry of the

Spirit those things Christ would have them remember were brought back to them. So the word of prophecy came not "from any man's private impulse." While that is true in the specific sense it is more generally true that Christ, speaking of all that they should receive from Him, promised that the Comforter should bring to remembrance what He could mean to them.

It is in this way that He is able to give peace, relief, comfort and joy. Natural abilities cannot do this: One greater than ourselves is the spring of all spiritual comfort. In our experience we find that whatever our condition may be the Holy Spirit can give us power by which to overcome. "It comes and makes men sing in the dungeon, rejoice in the flames, glory in tribulation." Nothing can hinder the comfort He gives. He is alone able to meet our every need.

This He does by His own sovereign will. It is not of our accomplishment. To the end of his life the Christian remains frail. No matter what he is enabled to do he does it solely by the inward life of the Spirit. "It depends on the sovereign will of the Holy Ghost, and is not tied unto any rules or course of procedure." This is because the Holy Spirit is a free agent: indeed He often comes unexpectedly. What more amazingly true simile could there be of Him than when our Lord likened Him to the wind? That indeed is how we experience Him most frequently. When things are at their worst He comes and leads us out. When we have fallen before temptation and have yielded to that from which we could never extricate ourselves, He comes and gives us deliverance.

The growth of the soul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is as much the work of the Sovereign Grace as is its election and salvation. This is indeed subjective evidence; but what the Holy Spirit means in consolation can never be known apart from those who

experience Him. It is only as we know Him in our lives that we are able to speak of Him. "No sooner doth the believer begin to feel the life of a promise warming his heart, relieving, cherishing, supporting, delivering from fear, entanglements or troubles, but he may, he ought to know that the Holy Ghost is there, which will add to his joy and lead him into fellowship." The emphasis here is upon that which we ourselves know of Christ: for the very life of the Christian consists in his ability to understand and lean upon the One who has come to abide within him, for it is He who teaches him of Christ.

It is He who reveals to him, he knows not how, truths which can meet every situation. This He does by giving illumination to the scripture, and also by giving an understanding of the secrets of life. He ever brings Christ more fully before the gaze of the soul. "The Comforter shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you" (John xvi. 14). By this test can we discern the workings of the Holy Spirit in our lives and the whisperings of any other. The evidence of a false spirit is that it does not glorify Christ. The mark of the Holy Spirit is that He uplifts Christ in the believer, and by so doing gives the consolation that life needs so much. How does He glorify Christ? The Master says "He shall take of Mine." Of what things does He speak? He refers surely to the grace that is ever communicated to us. He brings us back again and again to that which is ultimate in our faith. He reassures us concerning the fact that salvation and growth in the Christian life are not of our achieving but are ever of His giving. "All things that the Father hath are Mine, therefore I said He shall take of Mine."

The mediation of Christ is ever made more obvious by the Spirit. "He reveals to the souls of sinners the good things of the covenant of grace." By thus postu-

lating the indwelling of a Spirit within the believing soul, Christian faith asserts the permanence of that work of salvation which begins in God and is continued and consummated by Him. When it is asserted "no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 3) it is evident that for the final perseverance of the people of God, God Himself is at work within the soul. This again can be brought to the test of experience. He who brings to mind the teaching of Christ, thus continuing the work of grace, comforts with the knowledge of the love of God (Rom. v. 5).

This is our spiritual apprehension of life's greatest reality. As the soul becomes satiated with a sense of the love of God there enters into it such consolation as it could otherwise never know.

The realisation that in every circumstance God's love remains unchanged is the work of the Spirit. This realisation is the result of our new relationship to God. That we are the children of God is not the unqualified assertion of the human mind, it is the witness of the Divine Spirit (Rom. viii. 16). As the "Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" we are assured that the love which has bought us for itself will never allow us to be entirely overwhelmed.

The knowledge of our filial relationship to God is continually reimposed upon the mind by the Spirit. As we have become children of God by His primary work within us, we are assured of our son-ship by His continued Presence. The soul knows His voice when He speaks: it has communion with Him. Such added strength and delight in the midst of degradation could not possibly be the effect of any created power. When the Holy Spirit stills the tumult of our life and gives calm we know His Divine power.

In so doing He seals us (Eph. i. 13), for the seal imparts

its character to the thing it seals. His very righteousness is imprinted upon the one in whom He dwells. His *purpose* is also evidenced by the analogy of the "seal," for He confirms us in our faith. As we receive the testimony of the Spirit regarding Christ and are comforted by the knowledge that He brings of the love of God, which is the result of our new relationship with God, we know the truth that He "sets to His seal that God is true" (John iii. 33). That is to say, in the inner life the Spirit gives a sense of security which is the result of appropriation. The children of God are peculiarly His: they are, by the very consciousness of their sonship, distinguished. "It denotes not an act of sense in the heart but of security to the person."

The deepest and most cherished knowledge of the Christian life is that such life is more than experience, it is possession. We know ourselves to be secure because we are His (Rev. vii. 4, compare Ezek ix. 4).

In this regard the Holy Spirit is an "earnest" (2 Cor. i. 22). That is to say, He brings to the soul a foretaste of its future destiny and state. This is implicit in its realisation of possession. He not only gives us His gifts but Himself. "The thing that is here intended is a part of that which is to come, and but a part of it." For the believer is ever aware that what he knows, while it is confirmatory of the promises, is but the beginning of that which is to come.

From one point of view He is an earnest on the part of God. The Lord looks upon His own life within His people and views the inheritance as of His own grace. On the other hand, He is an earnest within the believer, because He brings him into an acquaintance with the love of God, and thus teaches him of the inheritance that shall be his (Gal. iv. 6, compare 1 Cor. ii. 9–10). He "assures us and secures us of the inheritance" (Isa. lix. 21).

This inward work of grace which is the peculiar function of God the Holy Spirit, serves to anoint the child of God. Just as Christ Himself was anointed to His three-fold office of King, Priest and Prophet, so we are anointed by the Holy Spirit to the life to which we are called (2 Cor. i. 21).

As it is by the Spirit that we are adopted into the family of God and learn in Him the meaning of supplication, for prayer is seen to be a duty required by God and at the same time a means of retaining communion with Him; from first to last the work of grace within the life of the believer is the result of the Spirit's work and power. He ministers to us all the time; He cherishes us. While glorifying Christ in us He makes possible our growth.

It is by Him that we are convicted of our sin, for He presents the claims of Christ to the soul. It is He who gives illumination, and enables men to see when naturally they are unable so to do. The beginning of salvation is the secret of the Spirit, and having believed upon Christ for salvation, we are led by Him into sanctification. This is the effect of His Presence alone. We, because He is within us, see things in a spiritual light, and can discern between good and evil (1 Cor. ii. 13).

While His Presence denotes and determines a new life of purity, it also brings a new sweetness in service. Because the life of the Christian, fashioned in the likeness of Christ, is a life of "doing good" it is of necessity dependent upon an inner comfort.

It is He who makes sweet and joyful to the soul the discoveries that we make concerning the will of God. As we realise that in doing His will there is deepest joy, and in the carrying out His behests is the way of peace, we realise, too, that it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to make this discovery.

This alone makes possible a new kind of joy and a new kind of life: for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit has significant consequences in every-day life. "Here is the wisdom of faith, to find out and meet with the Comforter in all these things."

It must of necessity be true that, deprived as he so often is of things that other people count clever, denied by the new standard his Master has brought to him of many things that seem to count as success, the Christian must have an inner source of joy and confidence. This is God at work within him. With this Presence he can have deliberate communion. In his life he is never alone. Whatever may happen to him the Spirit assures him that the way of truth is always the way that leads to life. He consoles him by the aid of memory; by the intuition of the love of God; by the promises that the scripture so clearly unfolds. The disciples "walked in fear of the Lord and in the consolation of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ix. 31). The corollary is obvious. The fear of the Lord is accompanied by the consolation of the Holy Spirit. "Whenever there is mention made of comfort and consolation in the scripture given to the saints, it is the proper consequent of the work of the Holy Ghost." What composure this brings to the soul. What poise and power it introduces. We can be confident because we are not dependent upon ourselves; guided by Him into all sorts of circumstances we can trust Him not only for our extrication, but that His purposes can be furthered through us. The Christian can rely wherever he is upon all the power that God has to give.

It is impossible for a man not to triumph in the midst of all his difficulties and distractions if he has a clear consciousness of all that the Holy Spirit performs within him. This is by no means theoretic. The inward life is not the measure merely of the outward life: it

is its source and constant supply. If we can bring to the problems of life the resolution and the quietude the consciousness this indwelling gives, we shall have both deliverance and authority. We need never fear that we shall be forsaken: for He has come to abide within us (2 Thess. ii. 16). We need never doubt our capacity to do that which God would have us do, for He is strong and fortifies the soul at all times (Heb. vi. 18). As he is precious to God so His Presence makes us doubly so. God who loves us for ourselves loves us for Himself (Phil. ii. 1).

The promise of peace that Jesus gave to His disciples was the inevitable consequent of the promise of the Holy Spirit. It was after He had assured them that though taken from them in bodily form He, by the Spirit, would be ever more dear to them, that He also promised them His peace. If our life in Christ depended upon ourselves we could never know peace, but because it is dependent upon God we can be at rest (Rom. xv. 13). "Not that this arises from our reflex consideration of the love of God, but rather gives occasion thereunto." By this Owen teaches that we do not win the Spirit by our love, nor attain His peace by our striving. What we know of God is real. It is not merely our thinking of Him and of His love that gives us, nor is it our striving that enables us to do, His will. In very truth it is God Himself who makes us conscious of Himself. It is the Holy Spirit who, by His own power in the soul, enables man to know the very Presence of God.

From this there comes the joy that the Christian knows as he lives in communion with his Lord (Rom. xiv. 17). By His very Presence in the soul the Spirit of God gives us the joy of God. He who is light, love and life, and rejoiceth ever in the consciousness of His own perfection, bequeaths to the humble heart a sense of that celestial living.

The truth is that when the Holy Spirit governs life, love becomes its law: for God, who is Love Himself, reveals to us how His love can win its response in life. Man can desire nothing more than this. The soul in communion with the Holy Spirit may not be able to give expression to that which it experiences, for the light so often seems to blind it, but nevertheless it knows that this inner experience is the most real thing and the most glorious that life can give. It can never deny this glory that has come to it. It can only ask that it may never be dimmed, but that, increasingly, strength may be given to bear its light. This is the hope the Holy Spirit gives (Rom. xv. 13). He who consoles us bids us look forward beyond the seen, even beyond the experiences that are ours now, to the glory that shall be revealed in us. Such glory can never transcend the One who lives within us, we can but enter ever more fully into fellowship with Him. As we do so He becomes our life: our communion with Him becomes the food and drink of the soul.

In communion with the Holy Spirit the believer realises the greatest promise of Christ. Our Lord instructed His disciples to pray to His Father for the gift of the Spirit. They needed Him as much as their daily bread (Luke xi. 13). This promise, when realised, should be as a well of water springing up within. They should ever have in their innermost being One who would give them consolation, refreshment and strength (John vii. 37-39). In this way the ministry which our Lord had commenced, and which He had committed to His disciples, would be carried on and accomplished.

This inner communion marks the differences between the administration of the old covenant and the new. In a special sense the work of the Christian ministry was from the first dependent upon the Holy Spirit. It was He who called and separated those who should carry

the good news into the world (Acts xiii. 2). It was He who would give to them the gifts and abilities which would make possible the spreading of the evangel (1 Cor. xii. 7-10). Christian faith in all its fulness would be nothing without Him. It is in this respect that efforts to subordinate the ministry of the word to rules which obliterate the Spirit are the worst feature of a non-spiritual Church, for He was given for the express purpose of bringing to the remembrance of men the things spoken by Christ.

This was true, also, in the case of the apostles who wrote the scriptures. They were given that we might believe. They were "written that we might believe, and believing have life through His Name" (John xx. 31). The work of the Spirit is to glorify Christ within the Church (John xxi. 14). It is His ministry that ever leads the Church into full usefulness. It is His Presence that saves the Church in times of apostasy. Where the Spirit is, Christ is, and where two or three are gathered together in His Name, there is He in the midst.

While this is true in the wider life of the Church, it is also true in the personal life of every believer.

In order that we may value His work aright and form a just understanding of His office in our own lives, we must ask the question: what is it that He comforts us against? Looking into human life, it is very obvious that the fact of *affliction* in some form or another is universal. The fact of human suffering is as wide as the human race. Yet in his suffering man has not been left without a Comforter. While it is deeply true that affliction itself is part of the provision God makes for His children (Heb. xii. 5, 6), it is also true that He has given to them the possibility of succour. To be wholly without affliction is in itself a temptation. It leads to all the conditions against which we are most urgently

warned. It leads to pride, self-confidence, inertness of spirit, lack of sympathy, dearth of love.

So it is that a measure of affliction is appointed for everyone. To seek to escape, means that we are not facing the true opportunities which afflictions offer in our lives. The very fact that some people attempt to withdraw from affliction and so evade the development of those potentialities which are within, is in itself an affliction against which we must guard. "There are two great evils—one of which does generally seize on men under their afflictions and keeps them from a due management of them."

One of the attitudes adopted under the afflictions of life is to despise them. The temptation that comes to some is to consider the chastenings of the Lord as of no account. They do not see God in them. They are concerned more with secondary causes than with the real problems, and even when they come they apply other remedies. In this attitude that marks so many men who strive to live without Christ, we see the greatest calamity of human life: for to despise the chastening of the Lord is to live as those who rule out the spiritual implications of afflictions and degrade human life to the measure of the beast.

There are others who, while recognising that chastenings come from the Lord, faint under them. Their spirits become utterly dejected; they become numb. "There is no due management of our souls under any affliction so that God may have the glory of it, and ourselves any spiritual benefit or improvement thereby, but by the consolation of the Holy Ghost."

That is how John Owen answers the problem of affliction. We are neither to despise the difficulties of life, nor are we to faint under them: we are to find in them an inner strength which will enable us to pass through them, and so enable them to exert their fullest

influence upon us. Thus Paul: "We glory in our tribulations" (Rom. v. 3): the full meaning of that expression cannot be understood apart from a realisation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. For in developing this thought in the succeeding verses the apostle teaches that it is from the "shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." So it is that often when we "receive the word in much affliction with joy in the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. i. 6) we are led by Him into an appreciation of all that God can mean in life whatever its circumstances may be. In all afflictions the only way to endure and profit by them is to receive from the Holy Spirit the consolation that He can always give. To those who would view the spiritual sufferings of life as of less consequence than the temporal, and would attempt, by refusing to use their spiritual faculties, to pass through life unscathed, the Holy Spirit teaches that suffering must be endured in spirit as well as in body.

In such endurance He gives by His consoling Presence the continued realisation of the love of God. Thus men realise that while affliction is hard, God is near; yes, even nearer than they would otherwise know Him to be. To those whose spirits fail in times of difficulty, who would sink under life's heavy load, still the Spirit comes with comfort. He assures them that there is One who will enable them to play the man—yes, to be more than conquerors "through Him that loveth us."

But there is a burden upon the human heart which weighs down the heart more than any affliction it can ever know. This is sin. In confronting the greatest tragedy of human life, with the problem of sin unsolved, human life remains for ever an enigma. With the power of sin unbroken, human life remains for ever a travesty. In dealing with the question of sin man needs a consolation deeper and more lasting than can be given him by

any other man. There is within him a deep sense of trouble and unease. He knows himself so often to be arrayed against God. Indeed, he knows that by his own foolishness and deliberate choosing of the worst he has separated himself from God. In Hebrews vi. 17, 18 there is an allusion to the man-slayer under the old law, who, having killed a man unawares, flees to the city of refuge. This foreshadows the refuge Christ gives from the guilt of sin. Men know not how or why at first, but they experience in fellowship with Jesus Christ freedom from the guilt of sin.

This is the consolation the Holy Spirit gives, for He brings the soul to Christ. Moreover, in entering more fully into fellowship with Him through the Spirit, we find power over sins. This, again, is the consolation of the Spirit, for He brings Christ into every activity of life. This experience needs no other attestation. It is final for the soul that knows it. It is the great reality. There is no questioning by the spiritually illumined of the glory of the light that is come upon him. The Holy Spirit working immediately upon the soul of man gives an understanding of life's afflictions by revealing through them all the constant love of God. And He, by bringing men to Christ, gives the only consolation they can ever find when the weight of sin oppresses.

Further than this, it can be readily admitted that the whole course of obedience can be to the unenlightened a burden. The new life can only lead to enterprise in a new energy. Duties which are obviously laid on the Christian can only be undertaken as the Holy Spirit grants the required strength. In prosperity, which can so easily make us carnal, we need His steadying influence. Even the comforts of our actual lives can separate us from God. It is necessary for Him to be always present. The wisdom to tread the path of every day aright can only

be found in Him. The Holy Spirit alone can make us fit for these things.

Coming more closely to the problem, we ask in what way does the Holy Spirit give this consolation? "All the consolations of the Holy Spirit consists in His acquainting us with, and communicating unto us, the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son, nor is there anything in the one or the other but He makes it a matter of consolation to us." So that we have our communion with the Father in His love, and the Son in His grace by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

The way in which the Holy Spirit consoles life is by giving it a direct awareness of the presence of God. This presence of God ever manifests itself through His love in the grace of Jesus Christ. The Spirit reaffirms in every renewed life Christ's basic assertion to His disciples, "The Father Himself loveth you" (John xvi. 27). The Spirit makes this real. Whatever may come in the life of the believer there is one thing he can never doubt, it is that God loves him. Of himself he could never hold continually to the fact of this Divine love. Life so often seems to aver the contrary. Events so frequently seem to mass themselves against his faith. He would either grow hard or he would sink under them. But he is not alone. One comes to him who becomes himself, although He ever remains distinct from him: He gives to him an immediate realisation of the love of God. It is with the "shining of the countenance of God upon us" that He comforts our souls (Ps. iv. 6, 7). What this experience is only those know to whom it has come. What the Holy Spirit gives only those who have received the gift can understand. What the continued realisation of the love of God can work within the soul only those know who taste and see the Lord is good. The believer, who is comforted as the Spirit communicates to him the fact of God's love, may be despised by

other people, and accounted a fool for Christ's sake, but his heart assures him that the Father loves him as a child. He may be poor, but such heavenly love enriches beyond the terms of human avarice. He may indeed mourn over his secret sins, but at the same time he knows that One who sees, understands and forgives.

This is because the Holy Spirit communicates to us the " grace " of Christ. All the fruits of His suffering, all the desirableness of His Person are brought home to the believing soul by the Holy Spirit. Whatever a deep sense of the soul's burden can mean, or what strength justification can give, or innumerable privileges that grace can bestow come from the Spirit who makes these real to us. Through all aspirations in the soul there is one principle which never varies: it is the ever-deepening appreciation by the believer that there is in life nothing ultimately valuable but that comes from love and goodwill. The Holy Spirit in all His varied activities works with this one determination—to bring us into an awareness of infinite, holy, seeking love. We know, with a knowledge that cannot be shaken, that God our Father, through the grace of Christ, of His love and tenderness, continues to do us good. For as the Spirit Himself lives within us, and we in Him, He Himself, who is God, bequeaths to us whom He begets, His own nature of love in which we can respond to His.

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The most urgent question that presents itself to the mind of the sincere Christian is this: what attitude must we adopt in our relationship to the Holy Spirit? How is it possible for us on our part to have communion with Him? What makes our response effective? If we are to have communion, then it must be a real fellowship. We must of ourselves know Him with whom we commune.

There are three general suggestions expressed

negatively in the scripture, which involve positive duties.

We are urged, in the first place, not to " grieve " Him. In the second place, we are commanded not to " quench " those things He brings to pass in our lives, while the third injunction is that we do not " resist " Him in His personal work within the soul. These commands can be connected very naturally with those works that the Holy Spirit does within us, the actions of His grace, and His personal indwelling.

When related, respectively, to the duties laid on the Christian life, our communion with the Spirit can be understood more clearly.

Our great concern must ever be with reference to His Person; for He who dwells within us wills our complete submission and co-operation. Yet we are told that we can grieve Him. This grieving may be active or passive. In any case it affects with sorrow the One who is grieved. It cannot be that the Holy Spirit can ever change His attitude to us, for He is God, and alteration, disappointment and changed will are incompatible with His infinite perfections. He remains eternally the same; no matter what we do or how far we stray, His work is constant within the soul. We can never grieve Him in the sense of turning Him from His purpose. We can never grieve Him so to alter His nature. Yet " men may actively do that which is fit and able to grieve anyone who stands affected toward them as doth the Holy Spirit."

That His nature is unchangeable is our greatest hope. In our communion with Him we often do that which violates His love, but never turns His purpose. This does not negative His feeling, for He who is love suffers with our inconsistency. The Holy Spirit is loving, tender, and ever concerned with our good and well-doing. We, indeed, may do those things which would grieve Him, and suffer in ourselves the loss consequent

upon such grieving. This is the way in which He is grieved within us. He is grieved to the extent of being limited. Ephesians iv. 21–24 show a development of progress in sanctification, and all the fruits of His love (vs. 25–29); so it is that He is grieved in us as we fall short. To that extent the Holy Spirit is hindered in His work.

The positive duty included in the command is this: that we, co-operating with Him, pursue true holiness of living. We must remember that as we are conformed to Him and exercise our minds and affections upon the love and kindness of the Holy Spirit, a union is made possible as He increasingly takes full possession of our personality. When the soul of man considers the love, tenderness and kindness of the Holy Spirit, and remembers, further, how he is concerned in our spiritual progress, it must be that we abstain from evil.

This is communion—the stretching out of soul to abstain from those things that are not pleasing to Him, and to do those things He counts worthy. Communion is obedience.

In 1 Thess. v. 19 the expression "quench not the Spirit" leads us to another negative aspect of communion. This concerns the operations of the Holy Spirit in His particular operations within the soul. Whatever good things come we must trace to their true origins. He is the immediate author of all grace. It is faith that takes every good thing as coming from Him. We "quench not the Spirit" when we receive the good things of God as from the Holy Spirit.

In His work as revealer of the word, the Holy Spirit is still the agency whereby we are brought into communion. It is possible for men to blind their eyes to His truth. Of the Jews, Stephen said: "they resisted the Holy Ghost" (Acts vii. 51), and it is specifically declared that this resistance was by disparaging and

despising the preaching of the word. As the Holy Spirit sets up the ministry in the Church and separates men to it; as He gives gifts which can be utilised and developed; so men who resist such manifestations of God resist Him.

But when such considerations have been taken into account it is necessary to enter more deeply into the problem of communion. In such an investigation we must ever remember the *reason* of worship. The Divine nature is the cause of true worship. It is God in the fulness of His Majesty, in the glory of His uncreated Being that we worship. In entering into communion with One Person in the Trinity, it is that we might have fellowship with all. It is impossible to worship One Person and not the whole Trinity, for we do not worship a particular Person, but the essence of God. Whatever may be the means whereby we draw near to God, the proper object of Divine worship is ever the Infinite Majesty which is the Sovereign cause of all.

This is common to all three Persons and is proper to each. The essence of Deity, to which we accord worship, is not a Person within the Trinity, but the Trinity as God. All true adoration is directed to that which is common to each member of the Trinity. When we begin our prayers to the Father and end them in the name of the Son, both are jointly invoked as God.

The bearing of this upon our communion with the Holy Spirit can be seen by reference to Eph. ii. 18: Here there is " distinction of Person as to their operations but not at all as to their being the object of our worship ": while it is in Christ that we come to the Father by the Spirit, it is communion with God as Infinite Lord of all that we have when we commune particularly with any of the Divine Persons. " The grace of the Father which we obtain by the mediation of the Son and the assistance of the Spirit is that which we draw nigh to God for."

In all our experience of communion one thing, and one thing only, arises : that is our need of grace. This is manifested to us in fellowship with each Person of the Trinity. We worship the whole Trinity, and every Person can come by what Name we invoke them. When one Person draws us to worship we do not worship Him to the exclusion of the other Person, but as One Eternal God. Such is our only safeguard against tritheism.

Yet we distinctly experience a communion with the Holy Spirit as with the Son and the Father (compare John xiv. 1). The comfort that He gives is the powerful motive in our worship. Yet we ever worship Him and commune with Him as God. With this clearly before us, as we remember the grace and love and all the wonders of consolation bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit in His work as Comforter, we are moved to love Him. "Only by the fruits of His love toward us are we stirred up into it." That is to say, the Christian is signally aware of One within himself with whom he communes, who lifts him to another outside himself. As he remembers who this One is, and what He does, his heart overflows with love.

This is basic in our communion. We meditate upon His mighty love, upon His comforting Presence, and meditating are drawn to Him in love.

It follows from this that it is necessary for us to believe in Him. "The distinction of the Persons in the Trinity is not to be fancied, but believed." The same constant assurance of faith whereby the believer trusts Christ for his salvation, and the Father for His grace, he exerts towards the Spirit for consolation. He is particularly sinned against when He is not honoured. When we fail to acknowledge Him as the true Author of all that is good and worthy in our lives we fail to have that communion with Him which is His gift and our blessing. Acts v. 3 show quite clearly that in failing

to acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the author of all good, man sins against Him. It is thus bidden that we must by faith take note of His countenance in all things; we ought to acknowledge every good thing as coming from Him.

It is this activity of faith directed toward the Holy Spirit that enables us to return praise. As we praise the Son (Rev. i. 5, 6) so we are to praise the Spirit, and live in the glad certainty of One who is in us, and who would ever give us of Himself.

From this meditation upon His love, and deep belief in His Presence arises a spiritual sense of His consolation. This gives meaning to prayer. We do not pray to the void when we know that He is near. The Son Himself is made real as we act upon the assumption of the Spirit's Presence. "This is the daily work of believers: they look upon, and by faith consider, the Holy Ghost as promised to be sent. In this promise they know lies all their greatest peace, mercy, joy and hope: for by Him, so promised, and Him alone, are these things communicated to them. If, therefore, our life to God, or the joy of that life be considerable, in this we are to abound, to ask Him of the Father, as children do of their parents, daily bread."

What an incitement to communion! As we take for granted the Presence of the Holy Spirit, we find that He is near. As we humble ourselves before Him He becomes the most real factor in our lives. Living in the consciousness of His Presence the believer is aware when He is grieved, or quenched, or resisted.

It is sadly true that those without Him are without consolation, without peace, without joy or hope, but as the mind is stayed upon Him the continued sense of His Presence brings the consolation it needs: for fellowship in the Spirit is the peculiar mark of the transformed life.

From this fellowship spring the fruits of life in Christ.

In trouble, difficulty, service, His communion is that which lifts the soul above the weakness of the flesh and the timidity of the spirit into the union with God which is light, and love, and joy, and peace.

This communion, like all other experiences of the Christian life, is a reality that cannot be denied. It is an immediate awareness of the soul. It is the final function of faith. It is the crowning gift of God. It is, indeed, God Himself taking us to Himself. So it is that in communion with the Spirit, we enter into the joy of our Lord.

The Practical Issues

The Practical Issues

Communion—The Conquest of Fear.

ONE of the greatest tragedies of modern times is the fear-ridden life. There is apprehension of some kind or another in most lives. Although the causes may be different, the results are usually the same. Its paralysing effects can be seen on every hand. In relation to the inner life there is nothing more destructive than fear. "Fear hath torment." Fear as a fact in human experience has its roots in the past, and its devastating power can be seen in maladjusted lives every day. Even in the Christian life fear is very prevalent. There are few people who do not know what it means. Beneath a brave exterior many carry a tormented soul.

There are many things a Christian fears. In some respects it is well that he should, and yet, while a wholesome fear may be a safeguard, a tormenting fear is the cause of much ineffectiveness. How many people lack the peace of God, and are unable to carry into life buoyancy, and are not able to help others as they might because they are always fearing some temptation? They think that at some time or another they will be placed in a position which will render their fall inevitable. Knowing something of themselves and how tremulous is their hold upon the noble things, and how near they often venture to the end of the abyss, there is a black fear that some day Nemesis will descend upon them.

Other people who have followed the Master a long way upon the pathway of life continually fear that the

hour will come when they will be unable to witness for Him. They have done much, and yet they fear they have not done enough. They have ventured far, but they fear to venture further.

It is certainly true that to many people there is a real fear of other people. We live more nearly than we are aware to the primitive self; the veneer of our civilized life at times wears thin. The old fear, sometimes even physical, certainly often mental and moral, impinges upon us.

To how many in the bitterness of self-scrutiny does the fear of isolation come? They know, because of some intuitive gleam, what that would mean: they feel that they could never stand against it. They fear loneliness more than anything else. Because, perhaps, their life revolves around one or two other people they think that without them they could not live.

Perhaps the deepest, most inexplicable fear of the Christian life is the thought that comes sometimes that Christ may fail us. We have learned to depend so much upon Him, and yet our experience presents barren patches and we wonder whether the time will come when God will try us by leaving us. The fear of being Christ-forsaken grips us.

All this is due to an imperfect acquaintance with the love of God, and can be traced ultimately to an undeveloped communion with God, In the life of the soul it is only communion with Him that casts out fear. Communion with God is the most practical safeguard, indeed the only one, for the spiritual life. If it is true that without communion with God there can be no spiritual life, it is doubly true that without an ever-deepening communion with God the soul of man is bereft of that power that alone protects him from fear.

It is "perfect love that casteth out fear" (1 John iv. 18). When the soul, forgetting itself, turns to God, and in communion with Him acknowledges His complete

supremacy it begins to find serenity: for the sense of God's Fatherliness is the beginning of the conquest of fear. To realise that the Unseen is indeed love is to enter into the abode of stillness. This gives peace because we know that our Father cares.

In the achievement of this conquest we must first be assured that He is our Father. This is the beginning. This emphasizes the necessity of Christ, for "no man cometh unto the Father but by Me," He said. Yet as we feel His Presence, and enter with Him into communion with the Father, the truth of which we are assured is that God never forsakes His own. Whatever distress, discouragement and disaster may be around us, we can follow Christ who not only revealed God as Father, but man as son. We can see that the life lived in communion with God is protected by the very fact of such communion. It is eternal in its nature and effect.

In this rare fellowship we "see Jesus," and seeing Him know something of what it means to trust, for He trusted to the utmost, and because He knew His Father, and ever lived in fellowship with Him, fear was conquered. This, then, is His grace: this is His gift of life. This is His teaching made possible by His living and dying—that God is love, and those who trust Him can rest for ever secure in that love. It is this knowledge of which Calvary is the supreme revelation, that God is love, which enables us, also, to love, and so lose our fear. To love Him gives to us increasing realisation that He will never leave us nor forsake us. To love others enables us, almost without anxious thought, to witness for Him. To love Christ and know that He cares is to assure our hearts that they need never fear isolation.

How can such a conquest of fear become practicable? By a recognition that the inward life is the real life; by a simple yet diligent cultivation of a spiritual awareness; by a steadfast resolve to look not at the things that are

seen but at those that are not seen; by a deliberate delight in the Spirit's Presence within the soul.

The principle is always faith. Once the edge goes from that the fellowship falters. Once the mind ceases to be illumined by that the vision fades. Communion conquers fear as the Christian assures himself repeatedly that God, in Christ, is very near.

The humility necessary in such a practice makes it necessary for us to enter the Kingdom as little children. The obvious ease of such a proceeding renders it oblivious to many, yet it is the only way of communion. It is the assurance of faith to remind ourselves over and over again that we have with us the Presence that spells power.

It is impossible to think of God without realising the dynamic energy that He gives. To open our eyes and see the mountain-side peopled by the hosts of heaven energises the soul to go forward with new courage. Even when in the desert or in Gethsemane we agonise, angels will minister and the soul will be strengthened. It is the consciousness of the Presence of God that enables His own to be like Him.

The pure in heart who see God are the strong in soul who enterprise for Him: for communion is possession. The consciousness of Christ carries with it the corresponding consciousness that we are in Him, even as we are His. If such is true, what need we fear? "Though an host should encamp against me, in this will I be confident." The knowledge of God's love, in Christ, gives to the one who trusts a vision and a spirit by means of which he can pass through this life as having no abiding city; and while fearing to the full its trials, and knowing, perhaps, the taste of its bitterness, is ever refreshed by the living water and built up by the heavenly manna. In communion with God he receives from God the love which casts out fear.

Communion—The Standard of Success

What is success? How many a man has asked this question at the beginning of life, when its possibilities have been an urge within him, and his spirit has been fired by the thought of all that he may be enabled to accomplish? There has been a light in his eye, and a zeal in his heart, and he has meant to do great things, and so in his moments of contemplation he has asked himself what is success?

The years have passed. Life has brought with it bitterness as well as joy. He has seen the passing of much that he has known and loved. He has seen the old landmarks obliterated. Many things buried beneath the stress and turmoil that every day has brought, have been apparently forgotten. He has lived perhaps keenly, certainly at times stressfully, and all the while his question has remained unanswered.

His standards have varied as the years have passed. While he has mellowed and grown more tolerant he has also become more easy, even to the extent of qualifying his ideal of goodness. At the end he has still to find his question unanswered, for when age creeps upon him he looks back and questions still.

There was a time when love and all that it involved spelt for him success. Much real nobility was in that aspiration, but at the same time much that was unworthy.

The phase passed and he evaluated success as wealth, and all that earthly prosperity involves. He grew in outlook, but at the same time his responsibilities increased and with those responsibilities there came a corresponding

emphasis upon the material safeguards that seemed to mean so much to life. Even those who value so much the development of mind find that it is not the final standard.

The world is still asking the question. Some would answer it by placing the standard outside the individual altogether. They would assert that the State or the race are bigger things than the individual. The standards of success, according to such a view, are determined by the welfare of the race, or by the code of the State to which we belong. Yet how cruel and ruthless such a view can be. How bitter the oppression it metes out to an unfortunate minority! How valuable the unguessed goodnesses it overlays or forgets.

For the Christian there is another standard by which the final success of his life must be judged. He has entered into a new relationship with God. There is erected within his soul an altar upon which burns the fire of sacrifice. To him the only standard of success is determined by God.

Yet even in the Christian life there may be false or partial ideas of success. Especially is this true in days such as the present when the emphasis is upon the obvious. We tend to look for results. We appreciate that which "our hands have handled." In 1 Cor. xiii the true standard of success is laid down unflinchingly. It is well for us to remember that the false or partial ideals are dealt with in this chapter before the true standard is affirmed. Success in the Christian life is not determined by the possession of any seeming gift, even though a person is honoured to use such a gift to the welfare of others: that is not the final standard. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels"—if that is all, I have fallen short of success.

Knowledge, not merely the accumulation of facts, but real knowledge of the things of God, does not enable

the possessor to feel assured of ultimate success, for knowledge can be barren. It can be of the letter only.

It is strangely true that even in the deeper elements of Christian life false standards can obtrude themselves, so we are warned that willingness to give of our substance, readiness to perish in the sincerity of our own beliefs (1 Cor. xiii. 3) is not the final standard of living.

There is something beyond all this. It is communion with God in love and grace and consolation that is the ultimate success. From this communion of love come the other things that evidence the Christian life, but they show forth that which is within the soul. They are aspects of a life deeper than our own; they are the results of a companionship which makes them possible.

It is to the believer that Christ says "Lovest thou Me." In the use of that term He shows that the true worth of our Christian life is the love that we bear to Him. While this love is manifested in our outward life, and inevitably shows itself in what we do and say, it is the love itself that matters most: for this love which is a communion between the redeemed and God is so real that it becomes for the believer his most treasured experience.

This shows the necessity for preserving the inner life. How sadly true it is that many apparently live their lives with little emphasis upon communion.

Communion is the real standard of life. What we know of God for ourselves, what we experience of Him as the object of our faith, determines what our life really is.

Only in communion do we know the secret of prayer. The life lived upon the surface, which barely touches the hem of His garment, may ask and receive, for He of whom we ask is more ready to give than we are to make our supplication, yet such a life knows little of the mystery of prayer.

Communion with God is that alone by which our life must be tested. This shows how utterly impossible it is for anyone to judge another. We may see the fruits, and thank God for them, but we may easily be deceived by the tares in the midst of the wheat: but "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High" has within himself a sanctuary of love. As he enters, so continually and so simply and honestly, into this sanctuary to find fellowship with his Lord, he is bringing his life to its true test.

In this we see what it is that makes the life of the soul real. It is not reproof or rigour, which often serve but to hide the hidden things of darkness, but a life made perfect by the gentle, caressing, yet firm, fingers of God.

In this pursuit of holiness, which is the reason for redemption, God and the soul seem to stand alone: for the essence of communion is intimacy. We know as we enter into the secret chamber of our soul that deep calls unto deep. Only so can we test our love by His: only so can we make it possible for our life to be lived according to His will. This, then, is the reason why we should cultivate communion with God. This is the final standard of success in the Christian life. We must enter ever more fully into fellowship with Him if we would enter into the inheritance of the saints in light.

This fellowship is the three-fold bond that binds the heart of the believer to his Lord.

His fellowship with the Father is in love. God's purpose is to win our love. To that end His mighty love has ever been bent upon us. The wonder of the soul is that it is possible for Him to delight Himself in our love. It is this communion with the Father in love that enables the believer to know that the Unseen is tender. God loves us with an everlasting love. We can never exhaust it. God loves us with a love unto death. He has given His Only Begotten Son to make

possible our return to Himself. God loves us, and so every moment of our day we can be assured: if we will but take heed to listen, if we will but open our eyes to see that His love remains constant. The fundamental fact in the Christian life is the experience of the love of God.

In this regard our communion with the Son is in grace. He who said "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" also said "My grace is sufficient." What the believer knows of the love of God is the result of this grace, yet it is something different. The grace of Christ is peculiar to Himself: it is a grace of forgiveness, of assurance and of holiness. He shares with us His life in God. Entering with Him into fellowship with the Father, the believer finds that there is also a fellowship with the Son distinct, yet in no way distracting; different, yet ever leading to a deeper apprehension of both.

The communion the believer has with the Holy Spirit is in consolation. The Comforter is He who teaches, strengthens, guides. Led by Him we become conscious of Him. Not at the first, perhaps, do we become aware of One other than the Father and the Son at work in our life; our appreciation of the Holy Spirit deepens with the years. Our ability to commune with the Spirit is the outcome of the continued Presence of the Spirit. As we receive the consolations that only the Spirit can give we enter into a peculiar communion with Him. It is the Spirit who ever witnesses to Christ, just as Christ witnesses to God.

There is, therefore, in the life of communion the true evidence of our life in God. That this is known only to ourselves serves but to enrich its meaning. In such communion all other things are without weight, nay, they must even be disregarded. The competing factors which play their part in our lives which others know, the insidious desire for self-aggrandisement, the lure of

power, the craving for the outward things mean nothing in the life of the soul. In communion with God the soul stands or falls by its own reality. What He means to us is alone worth while. This is the final test. Communion reveals the quality of ourselves.

If personality is of final worth, then communion must play a great part in our lives, for in the creation of character nothing matters more than this inner fellowship.

Unquestionably the control exercised by the inner life over all aspects of living is incalculable. Christian character is brought into being by man's response to the Divine initiative. It grows in fellowship with the Divine Spirit. As our mind is influenced more and more by the mind of Christ; as our will is infused in ever-growing power by His; as our love is lifted to the altitude of Calvary's Cross, something is brought into being that can only be explained by saying "Beloved, now are we the children of God." The character that has stability, and sympathy, and purpose, acquires such by communion with the Father. The creative Spirit manifests Himself supremely in "bringing many sons to glory." This glory is the likeness of Jesus within the soul of man.

When we ask of what this true success consists, the first fact that is borne in upon us is that communion brings a sense of power into life. The very fact that man becomes aware of a Presence within him of One greater than himself, brings with it the corresponding fact that such Presence means a strength greater than he has ever known before. This is the miracle of Pentecost. The transmuted soul is the work of the Holy Spirit. The communing disciple is the achieving saint. The one who attains spiritual conquest is the one who lives in the presence of the Lord.

Yet this standard is not merely subjective. True success in the Christian life, while it begins within,

evidences itself in service. Service is the spontaneous outgoing of the renewed life. It is a giving of that which has already been received. It is a putting into operation of that which has been infused. There can, finally, be no other urge to service in the Christian life than the communion of the soul with God. It is as the Christian, in meditation, is led by God to see the needs of other people that he feels within him the urge to succour them. It is as he is taught by God regarding Christ's will for himself and for others that he presses forward in the Divine service. True success in Christian work must ever be counted in terms of communion. It is communion that gives experimental knowledge of God. If it is true that between the soul and God there can be no intermediary, then the fact of communion becomes the ultimate postulation of the spiritual life: for there can be no other satisfaction in life than a complete surrender to Him.

The part that we play in this communion is both positive and negative. On the one hand, there must be a common-sense relinquishment of dubious actions. It is obvious that if we willingly deafen our ears to His voice we shall not hear much: or if we becloud our eyes we shall not see the vision of beauty.

On the other hand, consistent study of the Bible and a constant habit of prayer, while not in themselves the reality of communion, make it possible. Communion is an attitude of soul. It is the result of faith directed toward the Cross which, cultivated in love, leads to a new consciousness of life. We commune with the Spirit as we trust Christ, and in love to Him and others lay ourselves open to the Divine overture; and as taken up completely by the Divine will and experiencing the quality of a love sweeter than any earth can give, man measures himself by a new standard.

This standard comes from God. It is revealed by

Christ ; it is within our own soul : by it we stand or fall. Yet because the communion is not of our seeking but of God's giving we are made to stand. God's gift of Himself to the soul lifts the soul into the way of life that is life indeed. As we measure our success in terms of our communion, the Holy Spirit fits us for that fellowship that Christ died to give.

Communion—The Goal of Conversion

The most significant thing about human life is its progress. Every life tends somewhere: stagnation is impossible. Life either moves forward or backward. Especially is this true in the Christian life. It must ever be a development. It must ever grow from within. There must be at work in the redeemed soul an energising power which is transforming it into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

This is the result of our fellowship with Him. It is the consequent of our communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Conversion, far from being the end, is but the beginning. Its goal is communion, for out of such communion arise the tendencies that make for the living of the higher life.

Yet it is undeniable that in the Christian life there are many hindrances. Simply because conversion is the beginning, with an undefined territory remaining to be conquered, hindrances become apparent as life progresses.

First among the hindrances of the new life are the unconquered habits which are, as it were, taken over from the old. These are as varied as personality. They can only be broken as we live in conformity to Jesus Christ. While it is true that in some cases instantaneous conversion does mean a complete break with all things that appertain to the old life, it is also true that for many people there are in the new life shadows of the old. These unconquered habits—temper, sins of the flesh, attitudes of mind—serve to keep many a Christian upon the border land of experience. Not only so, but they

bring to many a Christian disappointment, even despair. Having made an initial surrender to Jesus Christ, the believer cannot understand why these things persist. He does not realise that it is necessary for him to enter into a communion with God by which, and by which alone, these tendencies can be overcome

Further, undisciplined qualities often hinder the true development of our souls. The qualities of the new life called into being by the Holy Spirit have to be so co-ordinated and utilised that each plays its separate part. It is necessary if such hindrances are to be removed that the very good qualities of life are brought into conformity to the mind of Christ.

It may be that the very fact of undiscovered potentialities hinders the work of grace. The Christian life often remains sterile because the believer has not discovered what God could do with him if he were willing.

All revolves around the fact that communion is to many Christians completely unknown. Such is the desolation of our spiritual life that we never enter fully into fellowship with Him Who is our life. Yet such communion must be the consequent of our confession. " Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God " (1 John iv. 15). The confession of Christ is the conversion of the soul, It is this that gives the change of direction to our personality. Indeed, it is this that introduces the motivating power that is the work of grace within the soul. When we meet Christ we come into contact with the One who alone is able to deal with sin. He can forgive past shortcomings, He can enable us to live and overcome its power. He can, by His life within the soul, prepare us for that greater life which we can have in Him.

Yet this conversion is dependent for its development upon communion. Communion is the test of conversion. We know whether it is real by the fact that we are in

communion with God. " He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him " (1 John iv. 16).

It is necessary, then, for the believer to ask himself this question: do I know anything of the reality of communion? All hinges upon this, and serves but to emphasize the immense practical importance of our subject. Lack of contact with Jesus Christ leads to retrogression in the spiritual life. Lack of service for Him means that ultimately the very fact of our conversion can be questioned. We can only be perfect in Him as we commune with Him.

It is imperative for us to remember that there is a goal for Christian life. This goal is not outside the personality of the redeemed; it is within himself, yet ever greater than himself. It is not dependent upon what he does, although his works reveal his life. It is dependent upon the communion he has with God in the inward life of grace.

Communion with God must be the end to which conversion is directed. We must never view conversion as an end in itself. It must ever be the beginning of something infinitely greater. The Christian life must ever be moving. The prayer of our Lord, " Sanctify them in Thy truth " (John xvii. 17) has deep meaning when viewed in relation to the inward life. Communion with God is the evidence that conversion is real (1 John i. 10): for from communion, which begins when Christ first receives the submission of our minds and wills, come the graces and powers which are peculiar to the Christian life. Communion with God brings to the soul the very life of God.

That such is very practical we realise when we think again upon the life of our Lord Jesus. As we realise how easily, and naturally, and beautifully He lived amid the stress and turmoil, we know that the fact of communion makes true human life possible.

It is communion with God that gives to men the ability to judge soberly. Amid all the changes of life with its problems, anxieties and many-sided demands, how can we retain, or even acquire, the ability to make unhurried judgments? Only as we retain with our souls a place of quietness into which we can enter, and entering find in fellowship with our Lord the direction He would give upon every subject. That such true tranquillity is by no means unusual can be realised as the beauty of so many normal Christian lives is observed. That people are able to live their lives quietly in the midst of struggle is made possible by communion.

It is communion that enables us to view life clearly. We can have within our souls a companionship to which we can bring every dubious question, every provoking situation. Through the eyes of Christ we can look into the souls of others, discerning something of their need, something, perhaps, of their lack of love; something, surely, of their yearning, and seeing, we can love: for communion with God enables us to love other people as He did.

It is this that gives to the one who lives in communion with God a trust in others which, seemingly so impracticable and child-like, is actually of far greater influence than we can understand. Such trust draws from other people a response. It is indeed God calling to them. As we trust them for His sake we make the only appeal to which men respond. As "it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance," so it is the kindness which comes from our communion that enables us to trust, and so win them.

It is surely true that in communion with God alone can the Christian find strength to face those inner temptations that linger after others have been overcome. There are temptations peculiar to the spiritual life against which we need to be continually upon our

guard. Such temptations, which would lead us, perhaps, to isolate ourselves; to be sure of ourselves; to think of others as being without the grace that we enjoy; can only be guarded against by a life of communion, made possible by humility.

Out of such arises the strength of those who abide in the Presence of the Lord. This is why the Christian can carry into life a confidence which he otherwise could never know. He knows more significantly than anything else that he enjoys communion with God. Nothing can rob him of this knowledge. It is his.

Such communion, however, does demand practice. It does not come unsought; we do not enjoy it naturally; it must be produced and cultivated. It is produced by the Presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but it must be cultivated by the believer.

The first and most desirable of all the elements in the practice of communion is the assumption of His Presence. It is so simple, and yet to many so incomprehensible. This is the work of faith. We have to tell ourselves repeatedly that He is near; even, further, that He is within. In such reassuring faith we find that the sense of His Presence does become an actuality. Assuming that He is, we find, sometimes with amazed surprise, that He has honoured His promise. In the practice of communion, then, we must first of all assume that the One with whom we would enjoy communion has done all that is necessary to make it possible. He has come Himself to us. What is involved in this coming of God to the soul is shown in the preceding chapters. It is for us to make the assumption. This can be done anywhere. It is, however, well for us that we should have some time in every day when we should assure ourselves that God is with us.

There arises from this assumption the assertion of Christ's sufficiency in all things. We only need to assume

that God is within us to know that to Christ He will be sufficient for all that life may bring. He who could still the storm and forgive the broken in heart and body is able to deal with everything in our lives. And as we remember that He is sufficient, we are reminded of His intercession. He prays for us when we forget to pray for ourselves. He places, as it were, before the Father all that He has done on our behalf; because of such intercession we enjoy communion.

With the assumption of His Presence and the assertion of His sufficiency there arises an attitude of waiting which is the soul of communion. There are certain aids to this. We must learn to meditate upon the scripture. We must learn to master our emotions, and to have method in prayer, but above all the cultivation of a waiting mind is the final requisite of the art of communion. As we wait patiently for Him, He speaks. We hear and, by His grace, obey.

Ultimately the fact of communion must be tested by everyone who would know its power. That such has been enjoyed by multitudes in the past is evidenced by the long sequence of Christian experience. That such is enjoyed to-day is shown in the lives made radiant by His Presence. That such may be our portion must be our prayer. In communion with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, our lives find their fullest expression, and are brought by Him into that certainty of faith in which our love reflects the beauty of His own.

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